INSPIRATIONAL DEVOTIONS

50 DEVOTIONS FOR COURAGE, HOPE, PEACE AND RENEWED STRENGTH

2025

Aimed To:

Restore & Empower

Authored By:

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AN ANTHEM FOR THE AFRAID

WHERE THE WEARY RISE

A BENEDICTION FOR THE BROKEN

Book Title: 50 Inspirational Devotions For Courage, Hope, Peace And Renewed Strength

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Dedication:

To the weary heart, the discouraged soul, and the one in need of hope,

May these devotions breathe courage into your spirit, awaken peace in your mind, and renew your strength for every step of your journey.

Acknowledgments

With heartfelt gratitude, I wish to thank all those who have been pillars of encouragement along this path.

To my family—your unwavering support and prayers have been my steady foundation.

To friends, mentors, and fellow believers—your stories, wisdom, and kindness have inspired many of the reflections in these pages.

And most of all, to my faithful God—thank You for being the source of all hope, peace, strength, and courage.

— Vespers Makado

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Introduction:

Title: Strength for the Journey

Life is filled with seasons—some filled with light and laughter, others marked by trials, heartache, or uncertainty. In every season, we need a word of encouragement, a reminder of God's nearness, and a reason to keep moving forward.

50 Inspirational Devotions for Courage, Hope, Peace, and Renewed Strength is a companion for your soul's journey. Each devotion is designed to speak life into your spirit, remind you of God's promises, and help you stand firm when life feels overwhelming.

Whether you're reading in the early morning stillness, during a quiet lunch break, or at the close of a long day, may each word strengthen your heart and remind you that you are not alone.

— Vespers Makado

Preface:

Title: A Word in Every Season

This devotional was born out of a deep desire to comfort, uplift, and inspire. Through Scripture, personal reflection, and Spirit-led insight, these devotions were written to meet you right where you are.

You may be walking through a valley, climbing a steep hill, or standing at a crossroads. Whatever your season, the Word of God is your guide and strength. Isaiah 40:31 reminds us that “those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

Let these devotions be a reminder that God is with you, fighting for you, and equipping you. With every page, may you find courage to face the day, hope to fuel your dreams, peace to guard your heart, and strength to keep going.

— Vespers Makado

YOU ARE GOD'S TEMPLE

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."
1 Corinthians 3:16-17

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DEVOTION

The first scripture above starts by asking if you know that you are a temple of God. Are you, as an individual, conscious or aware of the fact that you are a temple of God? Choose to define yourself and to identify yourself always as a temple of God. You might have failed at doing something, be it running a business, academics or in marriage, but never identify yourself as a failure but as God's temple always. Every day, wake up each morning reminding yourself that you are God's temple. Prioritise that definition or identity over anything you might choose to define/identify yourself with.

What importance exists in being God's temple? Being God's temple means you carry and contain God's presence and God's glory. In heaven, the living creatures, the twenty-four elders and all the angels bow down and worship each time they see God's glory, you carry that glory. You contain His presence and glory, it feels you completely. Since you carry His glory, therefore His favour, His blessings, His peace, His victory and His joy are attracted to you and abide in you. Being the Lord's temple is everything you need to overcome life's challenges and already you are that temple.

The first scripture went on to say that God's Spirit lives in you since you are His temple. This is the same spirit that was hovering over the waters in the beginning before creation. It is the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead. The Holy Spirit is the greatest force/power on the universe. Even now, it's raising the dead. Considering how powerful and great this Spirit in you is, you cannot be defeated. Sickness and failure cannot defeat you. This world and its challenges/pains bow before you because you are God's temple.

The second scripture above said that if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. This means that God makes it His responsibility to protect you and to watch over you because you are His temple. If you are God's temple, nothing fights against you and prospers because the Creator is your protector.

The second scripture above concluded by saying that God's temple is sacred. Sacred means to be set apart. Since you are set apart, you are also unique. Be proud of being different. You do not walk alone; you have never walked alone because His glory fills His temple completely and that glory shines on you. It gives you peace and joy. It also continuously opens or makes ways for you.

DISCOVERING YOURSELF MORE

"For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building."
1 Corinthians 3:9

02
DEVOTION

In the scripture above, we are being told that we are God's fellow-workers. What is the work that we do for the kingdom of God while on earth that makes us fellow workers with God?

"Then they asked Him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent."

The crowd asked Jesus what exactly is the work of God and how they can do it so that they too might become God's fellow-workers? From His response, we clearly see the work God requires us to do. It is to believe in the One God has sent, who is Jesus. By believing in Jesus, which already you do, you are doing the work God requires you to do hence you are God's fellow-worker. What a privilege it is to you for God to consider you His fellow-worker. The Creator of universe, the Alpha and the Omega who is the Sovereign Lord considers you His fellow-worker. Begin to identify and define yourself not as a failure but as God's fellow-worker. Put on a smile, you cannot be sad, worried or feel hopeless; you are God's fellow-worker.

The scripture went on to say that you are God's field. One thing about God's field is that its beautiful. In Genesis 2:9, it says that God made trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. This happened in the garden of Eden, God's field. Remind yourself that you are good and everything about you is pleasing and excellent because you are God's field. You are pleasing to the eye; in other words, you are beautiful because God says it in His word that you are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). Be confident, be bold, rejoice, smile and celebrate because you are God's field. Everything about Eden was good, when God looked down from heaven; He saw that everything He had made was good (Genesis 1:31). As God's field, know that God makes everything about you good. Boast of the beauty you received from the Lord, remembering that you are God's field or garden.

The scripture concluded by saying that you are God's building. This means you are a structure created by God; you were created by God. Your body and spirit came from God. What God creates, no man can tear it down or break it apart. If God is a Rock (Psalm 62:2), then you are also a rock because He created you from the same material that makes Him up. A rock survives every weather, be it the sun or wind or rain. You are a building cut out from the same rock as Christ, you can survive every challenge or pain and difficulty. You are God's strong and unshaken building.

PERFECTION

"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands."
Psalm 138:8 (NKJV)

03
DEVOTION

The scripture above said that God will perfect all things that concern you. What are the things that concern you? Your job concerns you; your health is a concern to you. Your finances concern you; your physical and spiritual safety concern you. Your mental health is also a concern to you. The basic needs of life, which are, food, clothing and shelter concern you. God will perfect all these and other things l didn't mention because He perfects that which concerns you. If He perfects it, then that means you will recover from that sickness, your business will profit, and you will have job security because God is perfecting it.

When we say something is perfect, it is excellent and delightful in all aspects. Your mental and physical health are going to be excellent and delightful in all aspects because God is perfecting them. Your marriage and your children's marriages are going to be excellent and delightful in all aspects because God is perfecting them.

When something is perfect, it is without fault or mistake. Perfect things are also accurate and flawless. That's the new state of everything that concern you, be it your health/finances, they are going to improve because the Lord will perfect them.

The next important thing is the process of perfection. The process might be painful, it might hurt. The process might be disappointing, and you might think that you are losing. When it seems like so, hold on to God's word and remember that He is perfecting everything that concern you. In the book of Job, we hear that when men are cast down, so can they say there is lifting (Job 22:29). Know that every trial, tribulation, challenge or difficulty is a step towards perfection. Difficult situations are the process of perfection, the result will always be delightful or excellent.

Always remember that God perfects everything that concerns you. Rejoice when faced by challenges and pain, knowing that He is perfecting that which concerns you. The result will always be accurate, flawless, delightful and excellent. If the Lord perfects that which concerns us, now we know that indeed in all things He is working for our good (Romans 8:28). If that which concerns you (e.g your health/finances) are not perfect, know that they are in the process of coming to perfection. If things already are perfect, know that greater levels of perfection are coming. The process of perfection might not always be good, friendly, easy or enjoyable, but know that the result of it all is always perfection. He is the God of Perfection; He perfects all that concern you. Always smile because it's being perfected by God!

FREEDOM AND GLORY

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
Galatians 2:20

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DEVOTION

The scripture above said that we were crucified with Christ. That means as Christ was being beaten, so did we. As Christ was being nailed to the cross, so did we. By being crucified, Christ was receiving the punishment of sin. That means as Christ was receiving the punishment of sin, so did we. After receiving punishment for sin, one becomes free from all charges and is no longer guilty of the crimes he/she committed. That's how we became free because of Christ, hence in Christ freedom becomes our portion. What did Christ free us from?

Isaiah 53:4-6 "Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

From what Isaiah wrote we can pick up what Christ freed us from. He freed us from our infirmities. An infirmity is a moral weakness of defect. In other words, Christ freed us from our sins. We are no longer weighed down by the burden of our sins. The shame, the pain, the suffering, the curses and all bad things that are supposed to be effects of our sins are no longer effective to us. In other words, we no longer experience all bad things we were supposed to encounter because Christ freed us.

Other things from Isaiah 53 that Christ freed us from include our sorrows. Sorrow refers to unhappiness or all feelings of regret. Sorrow is no longer our portion. Due to sorrow, people mourn. Mourning is no longer our portion, Christ freed us from it, He took up our sorrow. We considered Jesus to be foolish, to be a fool and to be a liar. Those who crucified Christ thought He was blaspheming God and deserved to die, yet through His death we were earning our freedom because we were being crucified with Him. Now that we were crucified and in Christ we paid the punishment for our sins, what's left for us is glory and honour.

Psalm 84:11 "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Since the punishment that brought us, peace was on Christ and we endured and completed that punishment in Christ because we were crucified as Christ was being crucified, now whats left for us as free people to enjoy is grace and glory.

TRIUMPH

"Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."
Revelations 5:5

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DEVOTION

What does triumph mean? Triumph refers to a conclusive success following an effort, conflict or confrontation of obstacles. It also means to prevail over rivals, challenges or difficulties. We all have certain challenges or difficulties we encounter in life. For some it can be financial instability, for some it's health issues, for others it might be problems in marriages while for some it might be continuous spiritual battles.

Despite the battle or challenge or difficulty you are currently facing, one of the elders who resides in heaven is bringing a good message to you. His message starts by saying that do not weep. Child of God, stop weeping. Yes, the situation might be difficult and heartbreaking but stop crying. Cry no more! That's the first message, do not weep. Stop weeping, regain your confidence and strength. In Christ you must rediscover your joy and happiness and stop weeping. The elder doesn't just say that do not weep and becomes quiet afterwards, he says do not weep and see. What's blocking your sight are your tears. You can't see ahead because you are crying. Stop crying and see. In situations that require you to give all hope and cry, do not cry but see. A certain man in the bible gave us an example of this, when he was supposed to weep, he didn't but he looked up and saw something.

Acts 7:55, 59 "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

Stephen is a great example of an individual who chose not to weep but looked up to heaven. They were stoning him but if he had chosen to cry and still look up, his tears would affect his ability to clearly see the glory of God in heaven. As a child of God, when stones are being thrown at you, do not weep, look up to heaven and see the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

What the elder calls us to see is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. The elder wants us to recognise that He has triumphed, He has overcome. Jesus on the cross said it is finished. That was a statement of victory He was giving for overcoming the pains and challenges in your path. Christ has overcome for you. Do not weep but start celebrating. The elder also said He is able. Jesus is able to heal you. Jesus can provide for you and sustain you. Do not weep, Jesus is able. He can make ways for you. 2 000 years ago, He triumphed for you!

A SOUND MIND

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."
2 TIMOTHY 1:7

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DEVOTION

What kind of thoughts fill our minds as believers? Other believers have suicidal thoughts, they no longer see a reason for their existence on earth and wish to die. For some believers, it's fear. Their minds are never at ease, they are always afraid. They are afraid of what the future will be like, they always imagine things not working out. They are afraid of failing academically or in marriages or in businesses. Such great fear of the unknown has gripped their minds. For some believers it's a negative mind. They do not believe anything good can happen, they always see the worst out of everything. Other believers have lost hope. In their minds, they are already defeated by everything that exists in life. The list of toxic thoughts which might exist in our minds goes on.

Is that the kind of mindset we have received from God? A mindset that lacks faith and always imagines destruction. A mindset that's filled with worry and bitterness, unforgiveness, resentment, revenge, anger and hatred. The scripture above tells us the kind of mind we received from God, it's a sound mind. A sound mind is a health mind. It's a mind that embraces freedom, peace, love, joy and righteousness. It's a mind that sees all things possible through Christ. You cannot be worried; a sound mind remembers that the Lord is in control. You cannot lose hope and start thinking of suicidal thoughts; a sound mind remembers that God knows the plans He has, good plans to prosper you and not to harm you.

From the Lord we have not received a mind that's defeated by fear and worry and stress easily. We have received a sound mind that rejoices during pains, trials and tribulations and keeps thanking God for His love, His grace, His faithfulness and His peace despite the surrounding situations. Let's look at one more characteristic of a sound mind.

2 Corinthians 10:5 "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

A sound mind doesn't allow any thought that goes against the knowledge of God to exist in it. Believing that you won't be healed is a thought that exalts itself above the knowledge of God because in Isaiah 53 we are clearly told that by His stripes we were healed. Such thoughts, including seeing yourself as a failure or suicidal thoughts, should be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

THE JOY OF SALVATION

"And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation."
Psalm 35:9

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DEVOTION

The is a certain type or kind of joy that never has to escape our hearts and minds at any given instance. We might be going through pains, challenges, difficulty, trials and tribulations but there are never sufficient to steal this joy from us. Nothing at any given moment in time can take away this joy from us, not even sin or shame or regret. No mistake or sin that we can commit, no matter how great we might think it is can remove this joy from us. Worry, stress, bitterness, anger, revenge, distress or frustration should not displace this joy in our hearts and minds. This joy is ever present.

The joy l am referring to is the joy of salvation. It is the joy that comes from simply knowing that we are saved. It is the joy that we get when we see Christ with wounds on His body and remember that He suffered so that we can be justified or freed from sin. When we imagine Christ carrying that heavy cross in the streets of Jerusalem on His way to Calvary to die for us, there is this joy that comes from realising that, and it fills our hearts. This joy exists when we look back and see the Lamb of God hanging lifeless on the cross after crying out that it is finished. This is the joy of salvation, the joy we get from knowing that we are saved.

This joy can never be taken away from us because once and for all, the King paid it all. Through His blood, our sins were conquered, and we were reconciled back to God. We forever gained peace with God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now our hearts are clean. From knowing this, we are filled with joy. This is the joy of our salvation.

In the scripture above, David said that his soul shall be joyful in the Lord. Our souls are joyful before the Lord because of this priceless gift of salvation. Even on our lives on earth, every day, we ought to be joyful because of the salvation we received two thousand years ago before we even started existing. This joy abides in our hearts forever.

The scripture above concludes by saying that the soul shall rejoice in His salvation. Does your soul rejoice daily in His salvation? One way to express the gratitude of salvation is to simply rejoice because of it. Nothing can take salvation from us because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us hence this joy cannot be stolen away from us by anything. Starting today, realise this joy of salvation and let it be a portion of your spirit. Let's rejoice daily because the Lamb of God was slain for us!

THE BELIEVER'S STRENGTH

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Philippians 4:6

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DEVOTION

We all at some moments go through situations that are heavy for us that we nearly give up. In such situations, we nearly lose hope and become afraid. During those times, we quickly believe that God has forsaken us. For Daniel, it was the lion's den. For Joseph, it was the pit and the prison. For Abraham and Zechariah, it was barrenness. For Job, it was sickness. For Silas, Paul, Peter and John, it was the prison.

There are moments in life where we go through heartbreaking moments which are a heavy burden on our hearts? In such situations, when all hope seems gone, when faith seems like it has failed and when the future according to us might seem dark, where should we get the strength to keep moving on? I'm happy that even Jesus Christ was once in such a situation. Let's see what His source of strength was.

Matthew 26:38-39 "Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.' Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as l will, but as you will."

Looking at that scripture, Jesus at that point was overwhelmed in his soul with sorrow to the point of death. Imagine just hearing out of a sudden that your child is dead, something you didn't expect. You will become overwhelmed with sorrow in your soul to the point of death. Where do we get strength in such times and in such situations. Let's follow what Jesus did, He prayed.

Prayer is our source of strength in difficult moments. Prayer is our escape from tough situations. Kneel and pray, your soul will be refreshed. The more problems arise, the more we should remain in prayer. When you feel like giving up, from prayer we find the strength to keep holding on.

In the scripture above from Philippians, we are told not to be anxious about anything. Do not worry, do not be curious about anything. Wondering whether you will pass or fail the exam, do not be curious. In everything, whether you are employed or not, whether you are sick or not, in everything; at the same time showing gratitude and being grateful to God, let your requests be made known to God. Through prayer, tell God everything that's burdening your heart, but combine that with thanksgiving. Prayer is the believer's strength!

BACKWARDS EVER! FORWARD NEVER!

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ."
Romans 3:23-24

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DEVOTION

The Bible, both the New and Old Testament, is not a complete story of everything that God has done on earth. The bible does not have the names of all the people God raised from the dead. It does not contain everything in detail that happened during creation, nor does it have all the prophets God used in the past. Even the New Testament affirms to this claim when it says the gospels do not contain all the miracles Jesus did, because if all miracles were to be written down, the whole world would not have enough room or space to contain the books. [John 21:25]

The question then becomes, why were these few moments in history captured and compiled to form the Bible. We also must understand that there are more dead bodies on earth than bodies alive. Why then do few instances get chosen to form the Bible. It is because they contribute something to the story of salvation, salvation is the most beautiful thing that has ever happened on earth. Great kingdoms have existed, kingdoms like Babylon, Medo-Persia and the Greek kingdom but nothing compares to the beauty of this story of salvation hence the story of salvation and all events that led to it form the bible so that they can be narrated even by future generations for ever and ever.

Nothing is as beautiful as the story of salvation. God himself presenting a lamb in human form to die for the sins of the world, once for all. This is the most beautiful thing that has ever happened on earth. The verse above said that we all sinned and fell short of the glory of God. All creation, all people who existed before and after Christ sinned and fell short of the Lord's glory. However, we are all justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. The event occurred more than two thousand years ago but up to this day, we still celebrate it.

From that, we see that the most beautiful thing that has ever happened on earth, even in our lives is not something that is coming in the future, it resides from the past. We can't say heaven will be the most beautiful thing because for us heaven is not possible without Christ, in other words, the future doesn't exist without the past. The death of Christ remains the most precious event of all time in both heaven and earth hence our major source of happiness is not in the future but exists in the past. A famous quote says, "Backwards never, forward ever," but after seeing the beauty contained in the past and how the whole world was justified freely and made righteous once, l say, "Backwards Ever, Forward Never!" The reason/origin of your success, prosperity, peace or joy is in the past not future so start celebrating already!

HE SHARES HIS HOLINESS

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."
2 Corinthians 5:21

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DEVOTION

"Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Revelations 4:8

The scripture above tells us what always happens in heaven. As John had a vision and, in his vision, saw heaven, he said that there are living creatures who never stop saying that holy is the Lord. Day and night, they repeat saying that God is Holy. From this, we know that God is Holy, He is righteous in all His ways, He is righteous in all His acts and in all His thoughts.

Another thing that l want you to see is that the living creatures can choose anything to praise God using. They can choose to proclaim His love, or they can proclaim His faithfulness, or they can proclaim His greatness, or they can declare His wisdom and understanding declaring that the Lord is all-knowing; but regardless of these special attributes of the Lord, the living creatures choose to worship Him because of His holiness or His righteousness. This shows us that God's holiness, or His righteousness is of great significance above all else and it should be exalted above all else.

Still on the discussion of His holiness, we know that God is the greatest being above all else. No one can stand up or against Him. Nothing and no one are equally in power with the Lord for the Lord is Creator of all. This means God can choose to display any character He wants and nothing can complain. If l were God, l would be an evil villain destroying humanity or anything close to that, but God; with all options before Him, He simply chooses to be holy and righteous. That's why His Holiness is of great importance such that the living creatures choose His holiness to worship Him with and nothing else.

What amazes me most is this, God being holy isn't stingy with His holiness, but He shares His holiness to us who don't deserve. We all sinned and fell short of the glory of God, but as according to the scripture above, God made Christ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Jesus we might be the righteousness of God. God shares His holiness with an evil and fallen race.

The Lord seats on His throne, His righteousness or holiness goes before Him; yet He decides not to limit His holiness to Him alone, but through Christ He chose to share His holiness to us too. What a great God He is, who shares his holiness to us.

HE SHARES HIS GLORY

"The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory." Isaiah 60:19

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DEVOTION

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Revelations 4:11

In heaven, the twenty-four elders were heard by John proclaiming that God is worthy to receive glory. In other words, He deserves to receive glory. It's not only the twenty-four elders who acknowledge that; all His creation does. As children of God, especially in our fellowships, we always say that to God be the glory. In other words, we also do acknowledge that God is worthy to receive all the glory.

What goes on to surprise me is that God doesn't confine His glory to Himself, rather, He shares His glory with us. He makes His light shine in us. From the scripture above in Isaiah, it said that the sun is no longer our light by day, nor does the brightness of the moon shine on us, but the Lord is our everlasting light. The Lord is now the light shining within us. Jesus Himself declares that He is the light of the world, and if He is in us, then His light shines within us. If His light shines within us, then His glory exists in us.

The Lord shares His glory with us. All creation does acknowledge that the Lord is worthy to receive glory, and after God receives glory, He freely shares it with us. He gives us His glory. I love when in Psalms David says the same words that the Lord is our glory.

"For you are their glory and strength, and by your favour you exalt our horn." Psalm 89:17

The fact that God is our glory means that He shares His glory with us. If He shares His glory with us, that means His goodness and greatness and righteousness can be seen in us too. It's not only those around us who see this glory in us, but God also sees this glory in us. If God sees this glory in us, that just means He delights in us.

The other interesting and funny thing is this, the twenty-four elders in the scripture from Revelations we read clearly stated why God is worthy to receive glory. They said that because He created all thing and by His will everything has its being. The question now is, what have we done to deserve to be given this glory by God? What we did doesn't make us qualify to receive this glory, we all sinned and fell short of this glory from God [Romans 3:23]. He is gracious to still share His glory with us.

JUSTICE AND MERCY

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."
Romans 8:28

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DEVOTION

That's a very difficult scripture. It's easy to say but difficult to put into practise. It's easy to preach but difficult to exercise. This scripture feeds from the theme of trusting God. The moment we can put that scripture into practise, we fully trust God. If we can fully comprehend all ideas that scripture bring forth, then we are able to escape most problems like worry, stress, fear, pain from loss of loved ones and other difficulties which hurt us emotionally like poverty and sickness.

Let's understand what that scripture says, it says that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. All things refer to both good and bad situations. This means that during trouble and difficulty, we should be able to say that God is still working for our good since in all ways and in all things, He works for our good. Choosing to accept this scripture as true, is choosing to believe that the death of your parents when you were young was God working for your good. Its choosing to believe that the reason I'm poor today is because God is working for my good. Its choosing to believe that the reason why my husband is a drunkard who returns home from the bar everyday at 2am is because God is working for my good. This really is a very difficulty scripture which calls for a higher level of faith.

Let me try to prove why that scripture is true. I will prove it using two things, justice and mercy. If we understand what His justice means to us, then we should see that He blesses all good things we do by continuously working for our good in all situations. That's one side of the story, where we do good, and He blesses the good things we do by working for our good. Now, the other side of the story is this, what if when we do bad things, such that we no longer deserve His goodness but His punishment, in that case, will God do bad things to us, like making us sick?

That is when mercy comes in. The Lord's mercy simply says, for the bad things you do, l will forgive you and not withhold the good l already had in plan for you. In other words, whether we do good or do bad, still the result remains God doing good for us for when we do good, through His justice He blesses us and when we do bad, through His mercy and forgiveness He still blesses us; hence the result is only one, God working for our good. Conclusion: the scripture is true.

We all know that God is just, and inasmuch as He is just, He is also merciful, and He forgives. It doesn't make sense for these two characters two exist in one being for they contradict themselves but that's just who God is. He works for our good.

IN LOVE WITH CREATION

"You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways and loving towards all He has made."
Psalm 145:16-17

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DEVOTION

God is in love with creation. He cares for everything He made; He has compassion on His creation. Sending Jesus Christ to die for a world covered in sin is proof that the Lord loves everything He made. John 3:16 says it clearly, it says that for God so loved.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

The verse above says it clearly, it says that God so loved. God so loved you that He send Jesus. God so loved me that He send Jesus. God so loved Africa, Asia and Europe that He send Jesus. God so loved the world. God is in love with His creation.

Love is a feeling of care and mercy towards something. Love is a deep or abiding liking for something. Love is that feeling of intense attraction towards someone. When someone loves you, he/she needs you or is strongly inclined towards you. God has and feels all that for you. The nice thing is, it's not just you alone but if it's everything He made, then even all plants, all animals, all insects and all rocks are loved by God. This love is spread towards all His creation, lets read a scripture where that is displayed.

"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will l curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will l destroy all living creatures, as l have done." Genesis 8:21

After God destroyed the world with a flood, He regretted. This just shows how deeply in love He is with His creation. He promised never to destroy all living creatures again. From the verse we read in Psalm, He satisfies the desires of every living thing. That means He meets our needs too. Not just our needs alone, but even those of all creatures and all animals and plants. That's Him being loving towards all He has made. In other words, this whole world is pivoted on God's love for all. It is because of His love that we are alive. It is because of His love that we eat because through His love, He provides animals so we can have meat, and He makes plants to grow in their season so we can have food. Everything happens because of His love. Let's take nothing for granted and start to think of everything and every blessing as an expression of God's love. We are forgiven because of His love; we are made righteous through His love. Its all about His love for creation, only His love.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

"Yet He has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."
Acts 14:17

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DEVOTION

Why do we limit our testimonies to what God only does in our lives when all He does is way beyond that? Why do we perceive God from what only happens around us when what He does in greater than that? The Lord just doesn't feed you alone, even a homeless child deep in the rural areas of Somalia was fed by God. The Lord doesn't heal you alone, even a sick wild animal in forests where no one sees was healed by God. God doesn't operate in our lives alone; He is the Lord of all the earth. He doesn't control what happens to you alone, even the sun, the stars and the moon are controlled by Him. When we can see this, we now see the bigger picture.

If God operated in my life alone and confined His blessings to me alone, l wouldn't pray to such a God. I believe that God blesses and heals our communities, our societies, our nations, our continents and the whole world at large. Even in the oceans where no eye can notice, God still sustains and protects and gives breathe to all aquatic life. That's the God we worship; He is Lord of all.

All people were made by God, all people are loved by God. He provides food for all creatures; He provides water for plants and He loves all His creation. In the verse above, we heard the testimony God left for Himself. This testimony is the bigger picture. In other words, the testimony just says, don't limit my power and my ability to what l do in your life alone. Those who are about to take a flight ask God for protection, at the same instant someone in a court session is asking God for mercy, at the same instant someone in the hospital is asking God for healing. All these people would be in different places, yet God meets all their needs once, that's His greatness. Look around you and build up this bigger picture in you.

The verse above then said, He has shown us kindness by giving us rain from heaven. Whether we pray to Him or not, this rain is for all, that's the bigger picture. The Lord gives us crops in their season, even to those kneeling before false gods, He still gives them food. Not just humans alone, all animals are fed by Him. He is a great God. The Lord provides everyone with plenty of food and He feels our hearts with joy.

The Lord's blessings and His power isn't limited to us alone, He is the Lord of all creation. He provides for all, and He sustains all. Let's go before Him with thanksgiving for the love He has shown unto all creation. He blesses all nations and gives them peace. He forgives all souls and gives them His righteousness.

HE GIVES LIFE

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."
Acts 17:24-25

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DEVOTION

God gives life. He is the Lord who made the world and everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth, and He gives everything life. All creatures great and small are given life by God. For the ants to be alive or for every plant to be alive, it's because there is a Giver of that life, and He is God. If we understand that God gives life, then when we look at everything, we should see God. When we look at a dog running, we should see God's majestic life and praise Him for the life He gave it. When we come across anything with life, be it people or animals or plants, we should be reminded of how God gives life, and we should glorify Him for it.

The point I'm trying to make is that, when we see anything around us with life, that should be sufficient to chase our stress, our fear, our depression, our worry and our sadness away for we would be seeing God's might hand at work from the fact that there is life or from the fact that something is alive. We know that everything was made by Christ.

"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made." John 1:3

All things were made by Christ. We know that the child is made from whatever the parent is. They are one and have the same nature. A plant cannot produce an animal but a plant produces plants and animals produce animals. On top of that, a goat gives birth to a goat, a cat can only give birth to a cat so if Christ made everything, then everything made is Christ. When we look around, we should see Christ in everything. Going back to the issue of life, Jesus then says that He is the life.

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6a

We now know that if Christ made everything, then everything is Christ and everything contains Christ. When we look around or when we hold the stones in our hands, we should see Christ and His beauty in creation. Now, John 14 told us that Christ is life, and if Christ is in everything, then Christ is the life in everything. Christ holds everything together; Christ is everything and everything is Christ. Jesus gives life to all things. God gave Christ to all His creation so that He could be the life in all things. If you come across even a bird, recognise that God gives everything breath and life, acknowledge Christ in everything and praise God for it. Even for people living with disabilities, Christ is the life in them. God gives all things life. That's why David says everything with breath should praise God[Psalm 150:6].

THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand."
Psalm 149:6

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DEVOTION

In the scripture above, David says that a two-edged sword should be in our hands. What is this two-edged sword that should be in our hands?

"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17

The word of God is the sword, but David mentioned a two-edged sword. Now let's see how this word relates to being a two-edged sword.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

A two-edged sword is a double-edged sword, from this, we know that the two-edged sword that's supposed to be in our hands is the word of God. Never stand up to fight without this sword in your hands. Never stand up against any enemy which can be sickness or worry or fear without this sword in your hands. Do not walk this journey of life without holding this sword. As David said, this sword, which is the word of God, should be in your hand. We want to see what this sword can really achieve for us. We read only verse six from Psalm 149, lets read the remaining verses until the end to see what this sword can do.

"To defeat the nations and to punish the peoples; to bind their kings in chains, and their leaders in chains of iron; to punish the nations as God has commanded. This is the victory of God's people. Praise the Lord!" Psalm 149:7-9 (TEV)

We are clearly told in the scripture above what this sword can do. We can use it to defeat nations. We can use it to bind kings in chains. False ideologies from social media that aim to quench our faith are kings we should bind in chains using this sword. The scripture goes on to say as God commanded. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He used this sword to fight back, the sword which is God's word.

The scripture according to the Today's English Version ends by saying that this is the victory of God's people. The Kings James Version says that this honour have all His saints. The New International Version says that this is the glory of all His saints. My message to you is, hold this sword, whether there is war or no war, keep holding it because anything can happen anytime. As you hold it, remember that it is God's glory, His honour and His victory; He grants them to you through this sword.

CHRIST'S FORMULA: CHANGE OF FOCUS

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matthew 6:33

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DEVOTION

Matthew six from verse twenty-five is a very interesting story Jesus tells. In summary, Jesus tells us not to worry about our lives, what we will eat or drink and what we will wear. That's a really difficult thing to do, how can we stop ourselves from worrying about these things when we need them? Jesus went on to say that even unbelievers seek these things, and God knows that we also need them. The next verse after Jesus says those words is the best verse, He shows us how to escape this worry. The formula He gave works, whether you have these things or not, you won't be worried and bothered; that is if you exercise Christ's formula.

Christ's formula says but seek first the kingdom and His righteousness. On the earlier scriptures before Jesus says that; He was acknowledging our worries, how we need food and clothes and shelter and how we spend much of our time trying to figure out what we can do to have these things. In His teachings Jesus even said by worrying we cannot add a single hour to the length of our lives. On verse thirty-three, Jesus provides the solution, His solution is simple, seek first the kingdom and its righteousness. In other words, Christ's formula simply says, change your focus. Remove your thoughts and mind on ways you can use to have all the basic needs of life and substitute that with seeking the kingdom and knowing God.

This formula works. In other words, just stop thinking, just pause for a moment and take your bible and read and discover His kingdom. When you do that, you escape worry. You eliminate the pain of lacking when you just focus on Him. Keep focusing on Him and never on these needs. Ignore the needs, ignore the shortages. Yes, they are there but ignore. Instead, make more time for God everyday, discover His beauty and greatness through His word; that's the formula Christ gives.

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42

Most of us are like Martha, distracted by all the preparations and kitchen work. We are too occupied and busy with our jobs. Our responsibilities and duties take much of our time, but let's choose to be like Mary, to just ignore all these other things she was supposed to do and just sit at the Lord's feet and hear from Him. That's what seeking the kingdom is, in a world where there are life's worries, the cares of this world, trouble and all riches and pleasure. Let's change focus and give time to God.

BE JOYFUL IN GLORY

"Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds."
Psalm 149:5

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DEVOTION

I like how a bride wearing her white wedding dress on her wedding looks. Starting with the way she smiles, to the way she walks, to the way she eats and even the way she poses when pictures are being taken. As she poses, she conveys a message of the glory that surrounds her through body language. This is because she understands that she is the lady of the moment, she understands that all praise is directed to her and that her beauty is being noticed and appreciated. In other words, she will be joyful in glory. Being joyful in glory is rejoicing in glory or celebrating in glory.

In the same way a bride rejoices in glory, we should rejoice too in glory as children of God. We should be aware of the glory that we received from God that surrounds us all the time. We carry His presence, in the Old Testament, His presence used to be contained in the ark of the covenant. That has changed, like the ark of the covenant, we carry His presence. This is the glory that we have received from the Lord, we should rejoice in it. Look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself that you contain His presence. While in front of the mirror, start doing those poses a bride does on her wedding day when pictures are being taken, the same way she rejoices in glory, also do rejoice because the Lord's presence and glory that covers you.

It's not just His presence that should only contribute to us rejoicing, another thing is His power. Paul says it, we have received not the spirit of fear but the Spirit of power. This power is divine in its nature and able to demolish strongholds. Jesus said it, He said that He gave us power over all the works of the enemy. The spirit that is in us is greater that the spirit that is in the world. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places, far above all principalities, all powers and all authorities. Jesus addressed that issue and said that nothing can harm us. How beautiful is this, God has put the enemy under our feet. This is our victory; this is the glory of the saints, and we should rejoice due to this. We should be joyful in glory.

The verse above finishes by saying that we should sing aloud while we are on our beds. While others are having nightmares of snakes riding bicycles and chasing them, we enjoy protection, peace and joy from the Lord hence we rejoice on our beds. Many people reflect on all that has happened in their lives while they are on their beds. Those few minutes while waiting to fall asleep are the dangerous because that's when the mind is less occupied and begins to calculate, adding and subtracting bills and expense. For us, only grace surrounds so we rejoice on beds.

REJOICING IN OUR MAKER

"Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."
Psalm 149:2

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DEVOTION

We live in a very challenging and difficult world. Economically, this world is difficult. The cost of living is just high yet there is no employment. Education was replaced to being the secret of success with connections, now it's all about social links, knowing someone who knows someone and that person knowing someone. The world in no longer pivoted on justice but on corruption. Socially, this world is painful too. Some relationships are just not working, the rate of divorce is now just high. Unfaithfulness is present in marriages and relationships.

From all these problems l have been citing, other people can conclude that there is no longer any reason to rejoice or be happy for while on earth. Let me put this in the exact words we get from the letters of those who commit suicide, they all say, we no longer see any purpose in life or any reason to rejoice, but saints, is that true?

In the scripture above, we are given a reason to rejoice and where to rejoice. We should rejoice in our Maker. I can understand that you got retrenched from work and you are unemployed, l can understand that you got cheated on by your wife/husband and after cheating they didn't even ask for forgiveness but rather chose to divorce you. No matter the bad things that might have happened, that won't eliminate all reasons to rejoice in life, one reason and one option will forever remain and that is to rejoice in your Creator. I don't care how dark it looks for you, nor what the verdict is, no matter what difficult position or corner life has squzeed you onto, one option remains and that is to rejoice in your Maker.

Let's try to understand what to rejoice in your maker means. It means to find joy, peace and contentment in one's relationship with God. You must keep believing that God is good and that He desires the best for His people. Consider His love for you, how He expressed it by sending Christ to die for you; now you are the righteousness of God in Christ. When you reflect on all these things, you create an internal and eternal joy within your spirit that keeps you moving forward.

Jesus also introduced this idea of rejoicing in our Maker. Summarizing His teaching, we can conclude that more than any reason humans might choose to rejoice, we should rejoice in our Maker. Rejoicing in our Creator should be the top priority. Jesus said that the body is more important than clothes, in other words, let's put our eyes to the beauty of the body not of clothes. By doing that, we are rejoicing in what the Creator did (the body) and not our own creation (clothes).

CHILDREN OF ZION

"Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Psalm 149:2

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DEVOTION

By choosing to believe in Christ, Paul says that we are coming to Mount Zion. He also said that this Zion is the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

"But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirit of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." Hebrews 12:22-24

This Mount Zion that we came to has been properly defined for us with all its attributes stated. What a blessing it is for us to be members and citizens and children of Zion. One general thing l picked from Zion is that it cannot be shaken. From the scripture in Hebrews, let's see what cannot shake this Zion.

Firstly, all worldly systems and standards cannot shake us who belong to this Zion because this Zion is a heavenly Jerusalem. In other words, its not earthly, therefore earthly principles and earthly weapons cannot harm us because this Zion is heavenly. That is why we fix our eyes on things above.

The second thing that cannot shake us is any attacks from the enemy, because this Zion contains thousands upon thousands of angels. We know that angels are ministering spirits send to serve those who will inherit salvation [Hebrews 1:14]. Therefore, we know that we are safe for we are protected by the Lord's royal guards, which are angels. That means no power of the enemy can harm us.

The third thing that cannot harm us is the power of sin, for there exists Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant. Surely everything about this Mount Zion shows that it cannot be shaken. David realised this and wrote about it.

"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures for ever." Psalm 125:1

Being a child of Zion means you cannot be shaken. Economic or social challenges cannot shake you; sickness will not shake you, even sin cannot because you stand firm. Our opening scripture from Psalm 149 said that children of Zion should be joyful before their King. As a child of Zion, celebrate because nothing can move you. Be joyful all your days knowing that you belong to the city of the living God.

HE DELIGHTS IN YOU

"For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation."
Psalm 149:4

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DEVOTION

I have good news for you; the news is that the Lord delights in you. David revealed that to us in the scripture above, that God delights in His people. We are God's people, so He delights in us. You might be poor, academically you might not be that brilliant and successful, your business might be failing, your children might be disabled, and you might be sick with an incurable disease but always remember that God delights in you. No matter the situation surrounding you, no matter the pain you might be in, no matter the doctor's negative report or no matter what the haters say, God delights in you and that changes everything.

As you walk, as you pray, as you worship or as you go to work, just remember this one truth, that God delights in you. This is sufficient reason for us to overcome depression, rejection, loneliness, bitterness, fear, worry or any negative emotion, by simply remembering that God delights in us. We should have joy; we should be proud and we should have peace in our hearts because God delights in us.

The scripture above was extracted from the New International Version (NIV) which said that the Lord delights in you. The King James Version (KJV) has different words for the same verse, it says that the Lord takes pleasure in His people. Just pause and meditate on this, that the Lord takes pleasure in you. Another translation which is the Easy-To-Read Version (ERV) says that the Lord is happy with His people. The Lord is happy with you!

God delighting in you just means God is happy when you are happy. After passing an exam or after building a house or after graduating or after getting married or after giving birth or after anything good happens, you celebrate. If God is happy when you are happy it means He celebrates with you. The opposite of this is true, God is sad when you are sad. When you are in pain, when you are sick, God is discomforted too and He grieves in His heart, it's simply because He cares for you. Even when the trouble we might be in achieves for us a greater good, but the process which hurts us doesn't stop God from being affected too. To some extend He is affected and saddened in His Spirit because He delights in us.

God delights in us more when we trust Him. We should reduce complaining and being afraid and we should start rejoicing in suffering. God delights in us more when we trust Him. Our joy shouldn't be affected by troubles. In Hebrews, we are told that its difficult to please God without faith. Let's walk in faith for God to rejoice.

WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR JOY?

"What has happened to all your joy?"
Galatians 4:15a

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DEVOTION

I only extracted the first part of the full verse from Galatians 4:15, reading it from the New International Version. That part asked a very important question; it asked what happened to our joy. What happened to the joy we receive from knowing that God is the Provider, even though we are in need? What happened to the joy of knowing that God is the Healer, even though we are sick? What happened to the joy of knowing that God saved us through the redemption and forgiveness of sins that came through Jesus Christ? That is the joy of our salvation, what happened to that joy. Christ remains our peace in the midst of storms, He remains our joy in the face of persecution, what happened to that joy we are supposed to have in the midst of troubles, difficulties, pains and challenges? The kind of joy we find in Christ is eternal joy or spiritual joy, it's a joy that's not affected by situations or circumstances that happen around us. What happened to our undisturbed joy? Why is this joy being buried by our worries and fears? What happened to this joy?

Each morning, our souls are supposed to be filled with joy that comes from knowing that it's a day that the Lord has made. In Lamentations we are told that His mercies are new everyday, there is a joy that is supposed to fill us just from knowing that His mercies are new. Where is this joy? What happened to this joy inside us which feeds directly from His mercies? In John we are told that God loved the world, that means God loved even you. Where is the joy that's supposed to fill your heart all the time by simply knowing that God loves you? What happened to that joy?

"Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet l will rejoice in the Lord, l will be joyful in God my Saviour. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to go on the heights." Habakkuk 3:17-19

At some point, we once came across that scripture and applied it in our lives, what happened to it's application in our lives? That scripture in other words says that in poverty, failure, sickness or rejection, l will still rejoice. This scripture supports the idea of undisturbed joy. What happened to the joy in us that was encouraged by such a scripture? Habakkuk finished by saying that the Sovereign Lord is our strength. In moments of our weakness, His strength and power are displayed. It's okay if you lack anything, be it money, peace or joy; He is the Provider. Your emptiness is all you need to bring. Let's review and renew our undisturbed joy.

UNDERSTANDING GRACE

"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."
Romans 11:6

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DEVOTION

To understand grace more, let's start by properly defining it. Grace is the Greek word **'charis.'** It refers to God's unmerited favour, kindness and empowerment given freely to humanity, despite our unworthiness. Grace is not earned by works but it is a gift from God. The purpose of this devotion is to show that grace extends far beyond the forgiveness of sins it's usually associated with since it encompasses all of God's blessings, strength and any sort of divine enablement in life.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God told Paul that His grace is sufficient for him for His power is made perfect in weakness. Grace in that context referred to divine empowerment in trials. From Romans 12:6 and Ephesians 4:7, we are told that we have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us. This shows that grace enables spiritual gifts, calling and service. Another example comes from 2 Corinthians 9:8 which says that God is able to make all grace abound to us, so that in all things and at all times we might have all that we need and continue in our good works. Grace in that context included material blessings and provision. My last example comes from Hebrews 4:16 which says that we should approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in times of need. Grace in that scripture refers to help and strength in daily struggles.

From those examples, we can see how grace isn't only about salvation but operates in many areas. The next important thing to understand is that all blessings and everything good we have is by God's grace, not merely human effort. Even our ability to work and prosper comes from God (Deuteronomy 8:18, 1 Corinthians 4:7). We received everything that we have from God. All good things ultimately flow from His grace, not our merit. It all depends on His grace and not our hard work and efforts. We receive blessings based on His grace not our works or labour or efforts, and this applies to all areas in life.

Your good health is by His grace and not the several exercises you do daily. Your good marriage is by His grace and not your own intelligence. That new job is by His grace and not that you are the most deserving candidate based on academic qualifications. It's all by grace, all blessing come because of grace, not because we did anything to deserve. God doesn't financially bless us because we tithe, it's just because of grace. Inasmuch as we now understand grace, let's also acknowledge that grace doesn't eliminate human responsibility. Grace mustn't produce laziness!

IT'S THESE THREE

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."
Ephesians 2:8

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DEVOTION

In this devotion, we want to acknowledge and appreciate the story of salvation. We will do that by understanding what exactly occurred, the components or elements involved and the outcome of it. To summarize this story, allow me to reduce it to three things: grace, faith and Jesus Christ. A brief explanation of each component, first is grace. Grace comes from God and in salvation it was demonstrated by Him. Next is faith, faith is contained in humans who are the subjects to be saved. Then lastly Jesus, who is the Alpha and Omega, the Faithful Witness who seats at the Father's right hand. I will try explaining using only these three.

Try to imagine salvation as a picture I'm about to paint. First, we have a pit, a very big pit with all sorts of dirty things like mud. Think of it as the pit of sin all humans are in. It's all humans because all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Next, is a huge hand being lowered down from the sky trying to pick people up from this pit. That hand is grace: God expressed His grace so that all humans might be saved. The following thing is that the hand has been lowered and it's able to lift all people from that pit, but there is a small or tiny thing that's needed to be done. The small requirement is for those in the pit to lift or raise their hands so they can reach out to the hand that's already available and ready to lift them up.

This effort of those in the pit to raise their hands so they can meet or connect with the mighty hand that has been lowered down is important because they might be other individuals in the pit who do not want to get out but prefer to stay in the dirty and the mud. So, it's necessary for those who want to escape the pit to lift their hands and hold onto the mighty hand that has been lowered. What I'm referring to as the hands being lifted up is faith. Those in the pit of sin and shame should raise their faith and connect to the grace that has been poured from heaven.

Another challenge remains, the challenge is that the hands of those in the pit are dirty and the hand being lowered down from the sky is clean, these two can't really mix because of this difference in nature and characteristics. Something is needed to connect the two to become one so they can keep holding on to each other in the same nature. That's Jesus Christ. He stands between the faith that's lifted and the grace that's lowered down. From the bible, God provided His grace and through faith in Jesus as a response to that grace, we can escape the pit of sin we exist in. This is the story of salvation in another way. The scripture above said that by grace we have been saved through faith. It's these three; grace, faith and Jesus Christ.

PRAISING THE CREATOR

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord."
Psalm 150:6

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DEVOTION

David in his psalms tells us that everything should praise the Lord. In Psalm 148, he names all things that should praise God: sun, moon, shining stars, highest heaven, waters above the skies, great sea creatures, ocean depths, lightning, hail, snow, clouds, stormy winds, mountains, hills, fruit trees, forest trees, wild animals, cattle, small creatures, flying birds, kings of the earth, all nations, princes, rulers on earth, young men, young women, old men and children. Those are the characters mentioned in Psalm 148 and David says all these things should praise God. Verses five and six are the most interesting in Psalm 148.

"Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded, and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; He gave a decree that will never pass away." Psalm 148:5-6

We are told why all creation should praise the Lord. It's not only humans but even stars and fish and trees and stones should praise God. We got the reason for this from verse five, it's because the Lord commanded and everything was created. Now we should praise God for by His word everything came into being. Verse six goes on to tell us that God set these things in place for ever and ever. Think of the sun, moon and stars, God set them in place forever and ever. Verse six goes on to say that He gave a decree that will never pass away. Another version says He gave them laws they can never disobey. The sun is fixed to its position, the earth rotates around the sun and these are laws which can never disobey.

All creation should praise the Creator. David mentioned even the storm, lightning and snow and said that they too should praise the one who made them. The verse above, Psalm 150, told us that everything with breath should praise God. Since we are God's creation, we should praise the Creator. All things that we are making, be it houses or cars or clothes, we are making them from what God initially created. Our houses are built from the land God made. Our cars are made of metal, metals which come from minerals God made. Our clothes come from plants (cotton), plants which God made. From there we see that without God's creations, we wouldn't have our inventions because we too as humans are the Lord's creation.

I like this point, which says that **the works of His hands are the wonders of the world.** Waterfalls like Victoria Falls, natural occurring caves like Chinhoyi Caves, oceans like Bermuda triangle and forests like the Amazon forest are all His works.

JOINING THE HEAVENLY HOSTS

"Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts."
Psalm 148:2

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DEVOTION

The angels have a duty or obligation, one that they cannot fail to fulfil, and that duty is to praise God. Like the angels, as humans we have that duty or obligation on us too which is to praise God. The question is, why do we share the same duty or responsibility with the angels of praising God? It's because every creation is bound to glorify its Creator. The angels worship God because it's God who created them. As humans, we too ought to worship God because He created us too. The scripture below has evidence that one of the reasons the heavenly hosts worship is because its God who made them. What they are doing is to give glory and honour to their Maker.

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Revelations 4:11

The angels acknowledge that God is worthy to receive glory and honour and power because He created everything and by the Lord's will, all things were created and have their being. By the Lord's will, the lion, the elephant, the sun, the grass, the stones, ants, bees and dung Bettles were created and have their being. By the Lord's will, we too were created and have our being. That is why we ought to worship the Lord, just like the angels do for we share the same and exact duty and responsibility with them. Here is the interesting part, before we can worship God just like the heavenly hosts, let's first see how the heavenly hosts do it.

"Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Revelations 4:8

The heavenly hosts, which are the four living creatures in this case, worship God day and night. That's the same responsibility we have, to worship Him day and night. Yet, we are always occupied with other things, our jobs, cooking, kids, academics, traveling, etc. I understand that we can't escape our earthly duties but what worries me most is when we fail to spare a few minutes to remind ourselves of God's holiness. The heavenly hosts are always worshiping, when we attend church, our spirits enter that same room with them and join them in worshipping God. When church is over, our spirits exit the room or that atmosphere. Let's dwell in that atmosphere always, let's frequently join the heavenly hosts in worship.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

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DEVOTION

I want to talk about two different types of freedom we received in Christ. First is freedom from sin, Jesus mentions it in John 8.

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciple. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:31-36

Jesus said that before He set us free, we were all slaves to sin but when He set us free, we became free from sin. When He said that free indeed, that really shows we absolutely and truly become free hence in Christ, we received freedom from sin.

The second type of freedom we received in Christ is very important because you might be free in the first freedom (freedom from sin) and still be bound and not free with regards to this second type of freedom. It's the one Paul tries to show us in Galatians 5 that we are set free. It's freedom from the law and it's commandments and it's regulations. We have been set free from the rules of the law, the law that Moses introduced where we must observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, or where we have to keep tithing and tithing and tithing or where we are limited to eat certain foods. Other believers doubt that we received that freedom but below is the verse that clearly shows us that we have been set free. Let's read that verse.

"By abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace," Ephesians 2:15 (NIV)

That verse says it clearly and perfectly, that in His flesh Jesus abolished the law with its commandments and regulations. We have been set free from the Jewish Law or the Law of Moses. I read from the New Internation Version, the Easy-To-Read Version says, "*Christ ended the law with its many commandments and rules*." The Today's English Version says and l quote, "*He abolished the Jewish Law with its commandments and rules*." The most common, King James Version says, "*Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*." You just read the truth; Christ set you free from the law. You are free!

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: JEALOUSY AND COMPETITION

"Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load."
Galatians 6:4-5

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DEVOTION

I like topics like these ones because they reflect spiritual maturity. That's when we get to see how mature and developed are you as a Christian or as a believer. In our journey of faith, emotional intelligence is very important. Moses was a very great man of God but when it comes to emotional maturity, he was poor in that area. After receiving the ten commandments for the first time, written by God Himself on a stone, Moses arrives and sees the children of Israel worshipping another idol made from minerals like gold, Moses, in anger, breaks the stone tablet. My question is, was that even necessary. The stone tablet was very important, he was supposed to be careful with it. Not only that incident, God told Moses to speak to the rock, but Moses driven by emotions, He hits the rock twice. What an emotionally immature individual Moses was and because of that immaturity and lack of intelligence when dealing with emotions, Moses failed to enter into the promised land.

That shows that a topic like this is very important. Are we able to handle our emotions as believers, are we emotionally mature? Are we still battling rejection or regret or shame? Let's go to the topic at hand: competition and jealousy.

Allow me to say this, having jealousy or having that spirit of competition just shows how you lack faith. Someone who walks in faith is able to see that God has enough blessings for all of us. There in no shortage in God's kingdom and all blessing are perfect and sufficient to the one receiving them, they are all unique in their own way. God has plenty to give to every individual on earth, there is no reason to fight or compete for something, there is no need to be jealousy, your turn will come. God is faithful. God's hand is not shortened, His eyes aren't blind that He can't see you.

The verse we read from Galatians said that each person should test his own actions. Test your own work yourself and see if you deserve glory for it. No one should do that for you. In other words, stop seeking validation and praise and glory and acceptance from people. Put yourself to a test. After testing yourself, take pride in yourself. In other words, give glory to yourself, rejoice alone as an individual concerning the good things you do. The verse says without comparing how good you are to someone. This is how you conquer the spirit of jealousy and competition, by focusing on your own lane. We all have different levels of intelligence, don't be offended by how others are better than you at doing something, we are gifted differently. Focus on your own lane and appreciate yourself for those small achievements. Verse five said each one should carry his own load. Stick to your lane!

A NEW LOOK AT FAITH

"Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."
Ephesians 1:3

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DEVOTION

Faith doesn't make sense. How can l say that by His stripes I'm healed when I'm sick and in pain? How can you say that joy is within you, yet your husband returns home everyday at 2am coming from the bar. Something about faith seems off. How can we believe that we posses or carry things we do not have at the present time? Yet without faith it's difficult to please God.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Hebrews 11:6

Life has been made difficult for us. So, we are supposed to believe the impossible to be possible? We are supposed to believe that we can move mountains, and we are supposed to believe that we can graduate and have beautiful and peaceful marriages. In other words, faith is believing the impossible to be possible, that's faith. We see that from Abraham, he believed the impossible to be possible.

"As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." Romans 4:17-21

Abraham, what a character! That verse shows us that Abraham believed the impossible. The title of this sermon is, another look at faith, let's try to look at faith differently. From Ephesians 1:3, we were told that God blessed us with every spiritual blessing. We possess all blessings. So, we are not really believing the impossible, but we are claiming what we already received in Christ. You believe that you will be healed when you are sick because you already received 'being healed' as a blessing in Christ's stripes. The new definition of faith is **acknowledging what we already have**. Faith is affirming that you will be rich because you already received wealthy as a blessing. Faith feeds from blessings we already spiritually received. Faith is how our spiritual blessings manifest into the physical or 'seen' world.

BECAUSE HE IS PERMANENT

"Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy."
Daniel 9:18

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DEVOTION

At some point in time, we committed sin. That makes us sinners. Even the Bible says it in Romans 3 that all have sinned and fell short of His glory. At some point in time, we sinned and fell short of His glory. The problem that creates is that our previous world of sin collides with the new world we are trying to establish, of our righteousness in Christ. The tricky part is, people still see the old us, they can't see the new man created within and we are going to be judged by the world. How do we handle such criticisms? This is the reason why many Christians backslide, it's because they are trying to start living according to the spirit, but the people around them push them back reminding them of the sins and crimes they committed together. When society fails to accept their recreated self, some give up on faith.

How are we supposed to handle such a situation, where you want to become a new creature in Christ but the shame and guilty and the people you used to commit sins and crimes with in your old life take your confidence away. What are you supposed to do? The verse we read from Daniel helps in such a situation, it said that we do not make requests, in other words we do not pray because we are righteous but because of God's great mercy. We don't read the word or preach in front of others because we are so holy according to our own works and efforts, but we simply do that because of one thing, God's great mercy. His mercy is the reason why we stand bold preaching His word without being afraid of the ghosts haunting us from our previous life and crimes and sins because we hide in His mercy.

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciple. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:31-36

The first point from that scripture is that Christ set us free from the sins and crimes we committed in our previous lives, but here is an interesting piece. Jesus first said that we are slaves, then He said that slaves have no permanent place, only sons have, then He said if the son sets you free, you will be free. In other words, Jesus is that son who is permanent and can set us free. It's Jesus and not Moses or Abraham because Jesus is permanent - He continuously sets us free from sin our whole lives.

AMEN

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God."
2 Corinthians 1:20

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DEVOTION

As God's church, let's aim to be educated. Let's strive to succeed academically and graduate from universities with degrees of a higher class. The truth is, God uses educated people more. Paul had a better educational background than Peter as Paul knew Hebrew (because he was a pharisee), Greek (since he was a Roman citizen) and Aramaic better than Peter. That difference in levels of education is further seen when we consider the number of books they wrote, Peter wrote two books and Paul wrote thirteen books. It shows us that education is really important.

A certain word I bring today requires some bit of financial or accounting knowledge. The writers of the Bible were very educated that if we read with limited educational knowledge, we might miss critical details. Consider the people God used: Moses studied in Egypt and Daniel studied in Babylon. Where are you studying?

The word I have today is **deposit**. From basic financial knowledge, a deposit is a sum of money or other asset given as an initial payment, to show good faith, or to reserve something for purchase. Notice how Paul uses this word to describe God's Spirit.

"Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13b-14

The Holy Spirit is a deposit. He is that asset God used to say that we can hold onto while we wait for Him to fulfil other promises He is to bring to pass, promises like resurrection and heaven. If the Holy Spirit is a deposit, then He is the first fulfilled promise. If God gave us a deposit, then we know that we can happily wait for the other things to come. The Holy Spirit is that deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance.

Since we received a deposit, then we know, and surely, we know that all His promises will be fulfilled. In other words, they are **Yes**. No matter the number of promises, no matter how unrealistic they might seem, we know that they shall be fulfilled, because we have seen that deposit He sent, that deposit lives in us, it's the Holy Spirit. The question is, what shall we say in response to this if we believe that surely His promises are true, we respond by saying **Amen**. The word 'amen' just means 'so be it.' From the scripture in 2 Corinthians, Paul said that the 'Amen' is spoken by us. Let's speak that Amen today. In response to a promise from Matthew 28:20 that Jesus shall be with us always to the very end of age/time, let's respond by saying Amen. Let's say Amen to all His promises for we already believe them all.

HE COMPLETES EVERYTHING

"Which is His Body, the fulness of Him who fills everything in every way."
Ephesians 1:23

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DEVOTION

We were created in Christ. Christ is the word of God, and through that word, we were made. In Christ, all things were made and without Christ, nothing would exist. Christ formed us. We started in Christ because all things start in Christ since Christ is the beginning of all things. He is the Alpha. The point l want to make is that, if we started in Christ, then we should end in Christ. If Christ is the 'introduction' of our lives, He must be the 'conclusion' too. We should finish in Christ. Finishing in Christ means He completes us.

"Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because l live, you also will live." John 14:19

In the scripture above, Christ shows that He completes us. He expressed that in this way, that it's because of Him that our future exists and it's not because of us. It's Him being alive that makes us live not us being alive. In other words, we do not complete ourselves, Christ completes us. We do not complete our future or the story of our life, Christ completes it. If that's the case, then we have no reason whatsoever to lose hope in life because the One who created us also completes us.

"Remain in Me and l will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." John 15:4

Jesus makes it clear that He is there to complete us. A branch which in not connected to the vine is not complete. It is only when it has access to the vine that the branch becomes fruitful. Why is it so, because without Christ, we lack the One who completes us in all aspects. Christ covers all areas, on the cross He said that it is finished because He had completed it all. He freed us from sin, He gave us His own righteousness, by His stripes, we are healed and through Him we received adoption into sonship and became priests to serve God. That was Jesus completing it all, and that's the same task He still does even up until today.

I liked the verse from Ephesians. It said that Christ fills everything in every way. He fills our joy and peace. He sustains and provides. He renews His mercy and forgives. He fills our souls with His presence. Christ fills all things in every way. He meets our physical needs; He provides His word as food for our spirits. He fills everything in everyway. The righteousness we failed to obtain from the law, in Christ we are freely justified. That means He completes even our righteousness. God is not limited by space; He is in us and in everything always. Christ completes!

COMPETENCE

"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God."
2 Corinthians 3:5

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DEVOTION

Competence is the issue at hand. To properly and accurately understand this word beyond general reasoning, let's see how it's defined. Competence is the quality or state of being competent. Being competent means having sufficient skill, knowledge, ability or qualifications.

I like how Paul addresses this issue of competence; he said that we are not competent in ourselves. In other words, by standing alone without God, we do not possess sufficient skills, knowledge, ability or qualifications. Without God, there is no competence. The shocking thing is that others believe that they are competent in themselves being apart from God. Paul mentions it clearly; we are not competent in ourselves. The strength you need to run your business does not come from you; it comes from God. The power you use to fight and win all spiritual battles does not come from you but from God. Let's honestly acknowledge that we need God, our competence is not in ourselves. We shouldn't lean on our own intelligence.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;" Proverbs 3:5

Paul says we are not competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves. In other words, according to our own power and efforts, we do not deserve the good and sweet things of life, so we don't speak saying we deserve them. That is what 'not claiming anything for ourselves' means.

Our competence comes from God. God enables us. He qualifies us. He gives us all necessary skills to get every job done. We rely on God for strength. God gives us victory and success in all things, be it our health or finances or academics. Our competence comes from God. Our validation and acceptance come from God. Our glory, our praise and honour come from God. Christ is our strength.

A scripture from Deuteronomy shows clearly that God is our competence. Let's read that very important verse.

"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today." Deuteronomy 8:17-18

That verse shows that God is also our financial competence. He makes us rich!

GOD MAKES US RICH

"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

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DEVOTION

Let's talk about money. We know that everyone wants money. Everyone wants to be rich and financially successful in life. Yes, getting employed or going to work is absolutely important, but above everything, God is the one who makes people rich. To understand this discussion, let's start with the background of the verse above, let's take it from Job.

"And said: 'Naked l came from my mother's womb, and naked l shall depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." Job 1:21

Job said that we enter this world empty and naked, without owning anything. We really need to understand that for that's how the financial status of every human begins like. We all start with nothing, entering this world naked, without holding or carrying or wearing anything that's financially of earthly value. After that, we start being clothed as babies and given food to eat, now Job describes that as the Lord 'giving' when He said that the Lord gives. Getting educated, being clothed, having somewhere to sleep, Job said that it's the Lord giving and providing. Evidence that the Lord takes away is that when we die, we live everything behind, so regarding all that we lost, we now know that the Lord has allowed it to be taken away from us.

Under that same perspective of being born empty, then in Corinthians Paul asks that what is it that we contain that we didn't receive? We didn't possess it since creation, we started owning assets as we grew, and Paul said we received from God. Look at your businesses, your cars, your houses and children, at some point you didn't have them, what is it that you have that you didn't receive from God. If its God who gives us, then He is the one who makes us rich.

"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today." Deuteronomy 8:17-18

It's not our power and the strength of our hands that produces our money or riches or wealth for us. It is God who gives us the ability to produce wealth. So, what is it that we have that we didn't receive from God? Today's English Version said, "God gives us the power to be rich." Jesus said that we need Him. Without Christ, even financial we cannot be wealth. "Apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5c

ALWAYS WITH YOU

"And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."
Ephesians 2:22

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DEVOTION

Christ constructed us to become a dwelling or a house in which God lives. When God looked at us, there was nothing in us that He could desire, and for that reason, He sent Christ. We traded with Christ our sins and guilty and shame and all our mistakes for His righteousness that comes through faith. Now, when God looks at us, He sees Christ's righteousness in us, and He makes us His dwelling place.

The nice thing about Christ is that we didn't choose Him first, He chose us first. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It didn't require our righteousness first for Christ to love us, but Christ said l came for the sinners. If Christ's love is in such a way, what can separate us from Him. When we sin, Christ comes to our aid. He will leave ninety-nine sheep out of one hundred just to get to that one which is lost. This just shows that nothing can take us away from our Good Shepherd.

"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:29

Nothing can snatch us out of God's hand. In other words, He is always with us. We live or dwell in our Father's hand always, where nothing can snatch us away. Let's go back to the verse we read from Ephesians. It said that God lives in us through His Spirit in us. This verse explains the manner in which we are temples of God, Paul explains it, it's because His Spirit is in us. How are we bonded to this Spirit?

"Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13b-14

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We are bonded with Him; we cannot be separated away from Him. That means God is always with us for we are sealed to Him. When we sin, the Holy Spirit doesn't leave, He grieves because we are sealed with Him.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30

When we sin and do bad, the Holy Spirit grieves. Inasmuch as He grieves, He still abides because we are sealed with Him for the day of redemption. That really shows that God is always with us. He always abides because we are one with Him in spirit.
"But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in Spirit." 1 Cor 6:17

A SIMPLE COMMAND

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."
Psalm 118:24

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DEVOTION

As a parent, you can give your child a simple command like bring me a glass of water. As an employer, your can give your employees a simple command like switch-off your cell phones while working. A teacher can give his/her students a simple command like writing corrections before starting any new work. The thing about simple commands is that they are easy to follow. It's something we should do with less difficulty. Even God, He gave us a simple command. God's simple command is for us to rejoice.

Each day is a new day that the Lord makes. He would have allowed the sun to shine, the wind to blow, the rivers to flow and for you to be alive. God gives us a simple command regarding each day He allows us to live in, He says that we should rejoice. We cannot allow ourselves to wake up stressed and frustrated each morning, we should rejoice. On your way to work, rejoice. While eating every meal, rejoice. In this book, l have provided several reasons why we should be happy, that is if you were following through all devotions. Just a summary, we should rejoice because God loves us. W should rejoice because we are sealed to His Spirit. We also should rejoice because Christ died for us, He gave us His righteousness and because God is our Maker. Let's rejoice because God is kind to us, and He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve.

"The Lord is thy Keeper: The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." Psalm 121:5

We should rejoice because He is our keeper. He watches over us. He is always with us. He sustains us. In other words, He takes care of us, and He provides. God is always in control. If you can sleep in a bus without knowing the driver, or sleep in a ship without knowing the captain, or sleep in a plane without knowing the pilot, while won't you rest and relax and rejoice in life knowing that God is in control. God, who is the Creator of the heavens and earth gives us a simple and daily command we must do everyday, that command is for us to rejoice.

"Nehemiah said, 'Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10

I take that as a daily instruction from God. We should rejoice everyday, eating happily and drinking sweet drinks. This is because every day is sacred to our Lord. We mustn't grieve because rejoicing in the Lord is our strength. Let's all obey this.

AN UNLIMITED GOD

"[17] Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. [27] I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"
Jeremiah 32:17, 27

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DEVOTION

Our universe is made up of three things, time, space and matter. These three are the fundamental building blocks of the universe. They paint the reality that we see, without them there wouldn't be anything. Time is split into past, present and future. Space is split into length, width and height. Matter is split into solid, liquid and gas. These three, each having its own trinity form the trinity of trinities. Time is when things happen, e.g. your birthday last year. Space refers to physical dimension, e.g. the distance between the clouds and the ground. Matter is what things are made of, e.g. a desk is made of wood.

Another important thing about these three is that they should exist at the same time. One cannot exist without the other. If we have matter but no space, where would we put it. If we have matter and space but no time, when would we put it? These three have to come into existence once. From Genesis, we see them being created by God and coming into existence once.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1

From that scripture, we see God creating time, space and matter. In the beginning (time), God created the heavens (space) and the earth (matter). Another important thing to note is that the author of something exists outside his/her creation. The one who created a phone doesn't live in a phone but lives out of it. In the same way, God exists outside of time, space and matter. That means that God is not limited by time, space and matter.

If God is not limited by time, that means He is **eternal**. That's why God is the Alpha and Omega (the Beginning and the End). God is the One who created time, so before time was created, there was no time. That means there is no time before the beginning. That's why we can never know how old God is because He made time. God is not limited by time; that's why the Bible says a day is like 1 000 years to God and 1 000 years like a day [2 Peter 3:8]. God isn't affected or limited by time.

If God is not limited by space, then He is **omni-present**. He is present at every location; He is available everywhere within space because He created space. That's why He is in heaven and on earth, in Africa and Asia and America at the same time. If God is not limited by matter, then He is **an immaterial spirit**. Water is matter God made, that's why He could split the red sea, and Jesus could walk on top of it. This all helps to explain the verse in Jeremiah 32 when God said nothing is hard for Him.

BOLDNESS

"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold."
2 Corinthians 3:12

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DEVOTION

"On that day you will realise that l am in my Father, and you are in me, and l am in you." John 14:20

Jesus is the life eternal. He came so that we could have eternal life. If He exists in us, that means we already have that eternal life in us. We will not get the eternal life later but we already possess it because Christ is the eternal life and since He already is in us, we carry that life. Not only is He our life eternal, He also is our dwelling place. We reside within Him; we live in Him. We do not face all situations alone; we face them with Christ. He is the strength that we lean on, and He is the glory that shines within us. Christ is our peace when wars are raging, He is the light that shines within when darkness closes in. He is the goodness that exists in us when there is nothing good in us, or when there is nothing beautiful to admire in us. He is our joy and the reason why we sing. In other words, Christ is our hope.

All that explains how Christ is our hope and how His existence inside us gives us hope. In His presence we are made whole. Nothing compares to His embrace because His love shall never be taken away from us and His blood shall never loose its power. Hope is the belief or expectation that something wished for will happen. Since Christ already created the world, then we know that the future He promised is certain. Since Christ already died on the cross, then we know that truly we received righteousness in Him. That means, all our hopes are made true is Christ. All our hopes become real in Christ. Since Christ is the strength that we lean on, even our hope for a brighter future while still on earth is made alive in Christ. Since Christ makes all our hopes into reality, Christ in us in the hope of glory.

"To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27

Since we have this hope in us, who is Christ. Since Christ makes all our hopes become true. Since Christ makes all our hopes come into reality. Since the resurrection of the dead is true in Christ, eternal life is true in Christ, our righteousness is true in Christ and our authority over all powers of God's anniversaries is true in Christ, then what does this hope, who is just Christ, achieve in us? The scripture from 2 Corinthians above said that since we have this hope, we are very bold. Since we have Christ, we are very bold. This hope creates confidence in us. This hope makes us to be brave and courageous and walk without fear. Our hope is in Christ, our hope is made alive in Christ, so let's become bold.

WE DO NOT LOSE HEART

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."
2 Corinthians 4:16

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DEVOTION

Let me start by revealing my little secret. My secret is this; there are several scriptures that I use for certain situations. When I am afraid and need encouragement, I often read Psalm 121 and Psalm 91. These scriptures remind me that God is with me. When I'm getting confused by popular world views and I want to remind myself that Jesus is Lord, I often read Ephesians 1:3-14 and John 1. There are many scriptures that I use for several situations, for example, when l need to remind myself that God and Christ Jesus are worthy to receive my praise and worship, I return to Revelations 4 and 5.

As for this devotion, it's a situation where one is in the midst of troubles, challenges, pains, persecutions and difficulties. There is a beautiful chapter in the Bible that helps when one is in such a situation. The chapter is 2 Corinthians 4. It helps you stand firm during tough, painful and heartbreaking seasons in life. Let's read a few verses from 2 Corinthians 4.

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." 2 Cor 4:8-9

Those are very encouraging words in tough times. They tell us that we are troubled but not defeated. That means we survive and win every trouble. Perplexed means that we are sometimes in doubt, but we never give up. We have many enemies who persecute us, but we are not abandoned, we are never without a friend because Jesus is our friend who always abides. We are badly hurt sometimes but never destroyed. My favourite scriptures from 2 Corinthians 4 are verse 16-18.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

No matter how difficult and challenging life might become, we do not lose heart. We do not give up. From the outward appearance, it might seem like we are losing and like we are being defeated, but in our spirits, we are being renewed and getting deeper revelations about Christ daily. Our troubles are giving us a permanent glory that outweighs the troubles. If it's like that, then we do not set our eyes on the troubles surrounding us because they are temporary, but we fix them on Jesus.

A NEW CREATURE

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."
2 Corinthians 5:17

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DEVOTION

In this devotion, let's celebrate the grace and restoration we received from God through Christ. Romans 3 tells us that we all sinned and fell short of the glory of God. That is the old creature, who knew not the fear of the Lord. Some committed crimes like murder and theft, adultery and all sorts of evil. The bible tells us that we were strangers and aliens to God, we couldn't stand before His presence and God had every reason to destroy us. But God, full of love and mercy, expressed His grace but sending Christ to die for all sin on the cross. In Christ, all of humanity freely received righteousness and became new creatures, pleasing vessels before God. Now we are new creatures, the righteousness of God in Christ. Our former ways of living have ended, the old has gone but the new has come.

The new which has come is to fear God. The new which has come is to do good works, and since we have already been made righteous in Christ, that righteousness produced in us obedience and now let's glorify God by living good lives. The fruit the righteousness we received produces in us is obedience, by choosing to obey God, we definitely become new creatures. The old have passed and the new has come.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting man's sins against them. And He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

What a scripture! We are being told that this idea of us being new creatures was from God. The whole process of us shifting from our old lives into becoming new creatures, it was God reconciling us to Himself through Christ. He didn't reconcile us alone, but the whole world. That includes people from all tribes, languages and nations. For us to be new creatures, God chose not to count our sins against us. The question now is, why was this done? It's so we could start living in Christ, living as new creatures and doing the good works. Let's see what the new creature is produced from.

"And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 4:24

Christ died so that we could throw away our old lives and put on this new self, this new self is created after God's righteousness and holiness. That's what our lives now are supposed to be like. That's who we are now, that's the new creatures we became.

CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."
2 Corinthians 5:20-21

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DEVOTION

If you study the Bible, you will see that identity is something that greatly matters to God. God would often change people's names before starting to use them. Abram became Abraham, Cephas became Peter and Saul became Paul. We also see that an identity matters so much because after Jacob wrestled with an angel the whole night, his reward was a change of identity; he became Israel and no longer Jacob. Identities matter so much to God, such that the first thing God gave Adam after creating him wasn't dominion or power or authority but an identity. God said that let us create men in our own image, that image is the identity, and the first thing God intends you to have before everything is an identity or character and not fame or wealthy or power or children or any blessing you can think of.

In the scripture above, we are told another identity that we are associated with, that identity is being Christ's ambassadors. The scripture above said that we are Christ's ambassadors. An ambassador is a messenger or a representative, who represents a certain authority in a foreign country. God wants us to represent Christ while on earth. We know that heaven is our home, let's represent heaven while on earth. Let's accept this responsibility of being Christ's ambassadors.

We definitely must be Christ's ambassadors. Paul begs us to be reconciled to God. Through Christ, God reconciled us to Himself. Now the question is, do we also choose to be reconciled to God? By choosing to be Christ's ambassadors, we are accepting to be reconciled to God. Verse twenty defines the character of an ambassador. God made Christ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that as Christ's ambassadors we might stand as the righteousness of God in Christ. That righteousness we received from Christ should produce obedience in us.

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

As Christ's ambassadors, we are letters. These letters are read by everybody. As we walk, people are reading us. As we talk or in all our actions, people are reading us. The title of our letter is, 'Christ's Ambassadors.' In everything we do, people are just taking notes of how Christ's Ambassadors behave. The kind of letters that we are, they are not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.

BOUNDLESS JOY

"I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds."
2 Corinthians 7:4

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DEVOTION

The art of joy and happiness is a very necessary skill that God wants us to master. God wants us to be happy. He wants us to rejoice. I can say that the heart of Inspirational Devotions is on the matter of joy and peace. We should learn how to be less affected by things that happen around us and remain joyful and happy all the time. This issue is so critical and sad such that a gardener and his wife leaving in a one-roomed house at the back of the main house will be happy and laughing everyday while the employers in the main house have no peace.

That shows that joy isn't tied to anything. It's not tied to money or current circumstances. It's not money that brings joy. Solomon, being very rich and prosperous, writes saying he sees no purpose of living. That means things around us shouldn't produce our joy. Our relationships or marriages or children or businesses or our occupations mustn't be the reasons why we have joy. Our joy should come from within. If it comes from within, then it can be a permanent joy.

What is joy? Joy is a feeling of extreme happiness. What is happiness? Happiness is a feeling arising from the consciousness of well-being or of enjoyment. In other words, joy and happiness are just states of being. It's more of a 'state' or rather, just a particular way of feeling. If it's a state of being, that means it isn't affected by things like health, success, failure, money etc. We can maintain that state throughout, regardless of what comes our way. Happiness is a state of being, that means we can be happy or have joy for no apparent reason.

In the scripture above, Pauls said that in troubles, his joy knows no bounds. In other words, his joy knows no limits or barriers. That means he remains happy and still has joy no matter what happens. That means always he rejoices, because he doesn't allow anything to affect his joy. Joy and happiness are states of being, nothing should shake us away from that state. If disturbed, we should return it.

This is an art we should learn, of always being happy and always having joy. Our own happiness is our own responsibility. No one will come and make us happy unless we make it our goal to entertain ourselves. Our joy should always be overflowing, it must know no bounds. It mustn't be limited by sickness or failure or rejection or any sad news like death. That's what boundless joy is like. While emotions fluctuate and change, it's possible to create a deep-seated joy that remains even in challenging times. This joy should be rooted in Christ Jesus, always!

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS

"So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours."
1 Corinthians 3:21-22

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DEVOTION

The purpose for this devotion is for us to have a different approach and a different idea or perspective towards life and what happens in it. Let's look around us, or just go into any town, stand still and just look around. You will see how busy people are with life, moving from one point to another; others go an extra mile, some even beyond their limits just to make things happen or to make things work. I'm not saying that's bad, but since we have God, we should have a different approach or view towards life and what we are required to do.

Inasmuch as we work, we should remember that God is the Provider and He doesn't fail to provide. The ants always have enough to eat, the grass in the forest always has water so it can grow in season. It's God who sustains all creation. His mighty hand is not far away, it's active everyday and He holds the universe together. That should give us peace and make us calm and steady. He is Lord and He is in control. Let's always remember that we never walk alone but God is with us. Let's never be too busy to extends that we no longer have time to feed our souls with His word and remember about all that the Lord has done while in His presence. Let's choose to live differently, remembering that He is the Creator; we should glorify Him for that.

The verse we read above told us that all things belong to us. You have all things. God gave everything to us. Through Christ, God gave us everything. This makes life easier and more interesting. It's okay, don't worry about not being educated that much, you belong to Christ, so all things are yours. Inasmuch as we work to achieve things, they are already ours. Even the things we fail to achieve, they belong to us too. That house worth $500 million you always see on the magazine belongs to you, since Christ made all things and all things belong to Christ, and if you are one in spirit with Christ, then all things are yours.

This should make us calm and operate not under pressure. You are sick and it's fine, but don't worry much because healing is yours since all things are yours. The scripture goes on to say, even the present and the future is yours. I liked the part that said whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, in other words, these popular preachers whose physical services you can't afford are yours too. We are like them.

"But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those 'super-apostles.' I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way." 2 Corinthians 11:5-6

BOAST IN THE LORD

"Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."
1 Corinthians 1:31

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DEVOTION

Let's address a certain animal that destroys believers, that animal is boasting. It's not different from another animal called pride, they exist in the same group. Boasting about our achievements is very bad. Even claiming that we made it is very bad. We must acknowledge God's strength and power that made everything possible because if the Lord didn't watch over, all efforts were going to be in vain.

There is nothing we can accomplish or achieve alone without God. This is true in all aspects. The first fact that proves that point is that; we are alive because God wants us to be alive, otherwise we would be dead. God protects us, He heals us, He gives us peace and joy and He gives us life on itself. Without all these, we couldn't have made it, so we owe it to God because He is the giver of life since we couldn't have made it if we had died. This shows that, we can't confine our achievements to be based on our ability alone, God is always a part of everything. God is the life inside of us, He created the sun that we see shining everyday and giving us light, He made the land that we walk on. That means we can't boast leaving God out of the equation/context. Let's see what Paul says about this issue.

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

The scripture above says it all. The most important thing to note is that God did all that so that no one may boast before Him. In other words, no one can stand before God taking pride in himself and whatever that person did. It's because God even made Christ to be our righteousness and our holiness, so we can't stand before God boasting about our own good works and our own obedience towards God. No one can boast before God, so let him who boasts boast in the Lord. Let's think of the kind of people we were before we came to Christ. We were not that educated, there were others, who were more intelligent and richer than us. But God chose us, the despised and not so influential people so He could shame the wise. We should never boast regarding ourselves to God/people. If we want to boast, let's boast in the Lord.

AN 'US' THING

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."."
Genesis 1:26

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DEVOTION

One of the fears that we have as believers is to have pride. We always look for the humblest way to do things or to say things. It's because we are constantly told that pride is what led to the fall of Lucifer (Satan). Also, we live in a world with popular quotes such as, 'Pride comes before a fall.' Generally, no one wants to be told that they are too proud. We are constantly reviewing ourselves to check if we are still humble or down to earth.

If that's the case, this devotion helps with such a situation. In this devotion, l want to introduce a new way of responding to compliments and all appreciation messages that are directed towards us. The first thing is that; l don't believe it's good or rather, it's the wisest thing to do for us to accept a compliment. For example, you just bought a new car and someone says congratulations. By saying thank you as a response, you are accepting or choosing to receive that compliment. Receiving a compliment is okay, there is nothing evil with it, but l don't think that's the humblest thing to do. We should never receive compliments, rather, we should pass them on. We can pass them on even to God. For example, in the example of someone saying congratulations on buying a new car, you can respond by saying that we thank God for His gift, He made it possible. That way, you didn't receive the compliment, but you passed it on.

I think passing the compliment to God is always the best option because the bible says we should boast in the Lord [1 Corinthians 1:31]. Another option besides passing the compliment to God exists, and that option is to make it an 'us' thing. This is rooted in the fact that, we never achieve anything alone, but there is always a contribution from someone who isn't yourself that made it possible. For example, if you buy something using money, besides the money being yours, you owe it to the person who printed that money. For you to travel, you owe it to other passengers too because the bus couldn't carry you alone. In other words, these people seem irrelevant but are important. For you to buy food and groceries, you owe it to the shopkeeper. His/her presence was important otherwise nothing could happen.

So, it's always an 'us' thing. There is nothing like 'I' made it, it's always 'we' made it; in everything! David needed Jonathan to be alive. Saul needed Samuel in order to be anointed. Above all, it's God who first introduced this 'us' thing. He didn't say let 'Me' make man but let 'Us' make man in 'Our' own image. Never limit an achievement to yourself, it's always an 'us' thing. No success is personal, never!

THE GREAT MISCONCEPTION

"Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy."
Daniel 9:18

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DEVOTION

There is a global error this devotion aims to address. This error even results in the stigmatization of the church of Christ. This thing happens when non-believers say that believers consider themselves so 'holy' and 'righteous' than non-believers. Most non-believers are offended by this and that's the reason why other non-believers do not go to church. Other non-believers even say that they prefer being married to drunkards than believers saying that drunkards express love to their neighbours better than believers. These ideas and thoughts are popular in the societies we live in and some of us even came across them.

Inasmuch as non-believers get offended by how believers act, that belief or line of thought is absolutely false. It is not rooted from proper scriptural understanding. It's understandable that the world might feel like as believers we are acting so holy, but that's never the case because we all stand as sinners before God. Romans 3 clearly tells us that all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God. In other words, we never stand in our own works or righteousness or holiness, both believers and non-believers, but we all stand in Christ's righteousness. Understanding this, cancels that popular ideology that believers act so 'holy' in society because we all sinned and it's Christ alone who worked for our salvation, no one works for it.

"So that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:29-30

God made Christ to become our righteousness and holiness. In other words, our own efforts to attain righteousness no longer achieves righteousness for us, they no longer matter for God made Christ to be our holiness. He did this so that no one would boast of his/her works. If it's like that, then why do believers still try to exercise righteousness and good works in the society? It's because this holiness we received from Christ produces in us obedience. In other words, we start obeying God because already He made us righteous, we don't obey God so He can make us righteous. That is our new nature, holiness becomes our new lifestyle.

So, there is no reason whatsoever to be offended by how righteous or holy you might think one is acting like. Our works don't count, we all stand in Christ's holiness. What we are doing by being good is to simply appreciate this grace. Daniel said we don't do good works because we are (or try to be) holy but because of His mercy.

JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

"And you are of Christ, and Christ is of God."
1 Corinthians 3:23

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DEVOTION

We address Jesus as our Lord. He is Lord Jesus. It's not like we ourselves created that term 'lord' but the bible tells us that we should confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe that with our hearts.

"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."
Romans 10:9-19

We are told that we should confess and believe it too that Jesus is Lord. My major interest is on the word 'lord.' Do we know the meaning of that word? Lord refers to one possessing mastery over others. In other words, the word lord is used to describe someone who owns something or someone. In historical contexts, particularly regarding slavery, this term referred to a person who owned slaves. What we have to understand is that this term brings about the authority, control, dominion, power and ownership one has.

If we say Christ is our Lord, then that means we are saying that He owns us. The scripture we read says that we are of Christ. That means we belong to Him. If we belong to Him, that means we are under him hence He is our lord. If we agree that Christ should be our lord, then we understand that He should have authority, control, dominion and power over us. Christ already exercises all that on us because He is our Lord.

Here is the interesting part, a slave ought to obey his lord because the lord owns him. Christ created us, so automatically He owns us. The question is, do we choose to obey Him since we already call Him Lord? Do we obey Christ? It's useless for us to call Him Lord when in reality we don't obey Him. Evidence that Christ is our lord is choosing to obey Him.

Christ, as our Lord, chose us to follow Him. He called us to imitate Him. We are of Christ; He is our lord. Let's live like He did. If Christ obeyed God, so should we too. If Christ resisted evil, so should we too. If Christ is our Lord, then we have a place to belong. We have someone who watches over us and takes responsibility over us. A lord over slaves makes sure that all his slaves ate. Under Christ, we are not exactly slaves, but as sons of God, Christ makes sure that we have all that we need. Christ is our Lord, that means He will return to resurrect us and unite us with Him forever.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 2:5

48
DEVOTION

It's all about the mindset. The reason why others are millionaires while others can barely afford to buy bread is because of our differences in thinking. Another man once said that if we remove our financial differences and give every person on earth the same amount of money, after some time, some would be in debt while others return to being millionaires. That simply shows how the mind plays a critical role in defining and shaping our lives. Evidence that the mind is important is that Christ came teaching. By teaching, He was trying to rewire our minds so we could believe in the truth He came declaring. The mind is important because it's the part of the body that makes all decisions.

Then Paul tells us that the mind that was in Christ should be the same mind in us. Christ didn't consider Himself to be equal with God but chose humility. Our minds should also choose humility in most situations. Christ while being persecuted on the cross said that God should forgive His murderers for they didn't know what they were doing. In other words, we too should choose forgiveness after people cause us trouble and persecution. We can't finish laying down all characteristics of the mind of Christ, but this verse summarizes it.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7

The summary of the characteristics of this mind of Christ is that it's a sound mind. By sound, l mean that it's a healthy mind. It carries no suicidal thoughts; it's not overcome by lust; it's a sound mind. A sound mind isn't overcome by fear. It doesn't stress by worrying about the future, but it trusts God. A sound mind has love. It's not filled with bitterness and revenge and unforgiveness, the mind of Christ we received is a mind filled with the love of God.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:16

The scripture from Philippians said that this mind should be in us. I want to conclude by saying that this mind is already in us. Since we received Christ and since according to John 14:20 Jesus is in us, then that means His mind is in us too since we carry Him. Hence the scripture from Corinthians becomes true, that we have the mind of Christ. As we read the word, we keep building on this mind, activating it more. Let's start acting according to this mind that we inherited.

NO FEAR; NO WORRY

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord. 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
Psalm 91:1-2

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DEVOTION

The Lord is our dwelling place. He is that shelter in which we stay. God is that place we call home. He is our dwelling place. I will show how God is our dwelling place using a scripture from Acts.

"For in Him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17:28a

God is not far from each one of us because we live and move and have our being in Him. That's how He is our dwelling place. Psalm 90 then goes on to say that He is our dwelling place from generation to generation. That means, all the days of our lives, He remains our dwelling place. Not just to us alone, but even to our children as well and to those who are to come, God is our dwelling place.

God being our dwelling place also means that He is our safe refuge. By refuge, l mean that He is our Hiding Place. He is our shelter when storms are raging. When there are droughts, floods, earthquakes or any problems like wars, people go to a refuge. God is that refuge. He is our fortress. We are safe in the hands of God.

The scripture above said that if we dwell in His shelter, we also will rest in His shadow. His shadow is His presence or His covering. We rest in His presence. It's the resting that l like most. By resting, we are showing that there is no fear and there is no worry. Since we exist under His shadow, let's cast away fear and anxiety. I know people who once walked under the shadow of His presence, the Israelites walked under a cloud by day and under fire by night. They were walking under the shadow of His presence. Why should we be afraid and worried when we live under His shadow.

Since we are under His shadow, there is a declaration we have to make. This declaration is to simply say that He is your refuge and your fortress, your God, in whom you trust. Trusting God is understanding that He uses all things and all situations to work for your good. Trusting God is knowing that everything, whether good or bad, is working for your good. Judas Iscariot played an important role in the story of redemption. Recognizing that is understanding what trusting God looks like. If you truly trust God, then you won't be afraid or worried because you know that God watches over you and you also know that He won't fail to provide. He is the Sustainer; He is in control. Trusting God is choosing not to lean on our own strength and ability. The Lord is our Keeper, He is the Shelter we stay in. Trusting God is walking in faith, it's believing God. If we trust God, there is no fear and worry.

REMEMBRANCE

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation." Colossians 1:21-22

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DEVOTION

There is a question I always asked myself, that is the Lord worthy? Is God worthy to receive all the praise, honour and glory? Why do we go to all-night prayers? Why do we fast? Those things honestly are difficult. I wanted to know if God is worthy to receive all that. Why shouldn't we live our lives for ourselves but live them for someone we believe to be in the heavens we have never been to. Is God really worthy? As l read the bible, l found my answer.

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power for you created all things, by your will they were created and have their being." Rev 4:11

That verse tells us that God really is worthy to receive glory and honour because He created everything that we see. He made the sun, the water, the land, plants, animals and He designed the human body. That means He is worthy to receive all honour and praise.

The next question l had was about Jesus Christ. We all know that most religions and beliefs exclude Jesus. What has Jesus done that makes Him worthy to receive glory and honour and praise? Religions like Islam and Hindu do not believe in Jesus. Why do we believe in Him? What makes Christ important?

"And they sang a new song, 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Revelations 5:9-10

Christ is worthy to receive glory and honour and praise because He was slain. In other words, He was put to death; He was murdered and persecuted. Using His blood, Christ purchased all men for God, people from all tribes and nations, and He made us worthy to stand before God's holy throne. The scripture above from Colossians said that we were once strangers and enemies to God, but He reconciled us through Christ's physical body which was put to death. Jesus presented us holy in God's sight, without blemish and free from accusation. It was Jesus' own choice.

This shows that Christ really is worthy. Jesus Christ, on the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it and gave thanks. He also took the cup; after giving thanks He shared it. He said that do all this in remembrance of Me. Christ wants us to remember Him, how He suffered and was put to death. Jesus is coming soon!

A New Chapter
Inspiration Stories

We are opening a new chapter in our Inspirational Devotions: a collection of "Inspiration Stories."

These are the uplifting tales that circulate online, anonymous yet powerful in their ability to encourage and challenge us. While not authored by me, their resonant messages align with our mission to find inspiration everywhere.

To firmly root each story in truth, I, Makado Vespers, will conclude each one with a Scripture passage, revealing the beautiful connection between the modern parable and God's eternal Word.

We hope these stories bless you and reveal His grace in unexpected ways.

With Grace and Truth,
Makado Vespers

INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

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BOY'S JOB APPRAISAL

01
STORY

A story tells that a little boy went into a drug store, reached for a soda carton and pulled it over to the telephone. He climbed onto the carton so that he could reach the buttons on the phone and proceeded to punch in seven digits (phone numbers). The store-owner observed and listened to the conversation.

"Lady, Can you give me the job of cutting your lawn?"

(At the other end of the phone line), "I already have someone to cut my lawn."

"Lady, I will cut your lawn for half the price of the person who cuts your lawn now."

"I'm very satisfied with the person who is presently cutting my lawn."

(With more perseverance), "Lady, I'll even sweep your curb and your sidewalk, so on Sunday you will have the prettiest lawn in all of Palm beach, Florida."

"No, thank you."

With a smile on his face, the little boy replaced the receiver. The store-owner, who was listening to all this, walked over to the boy.

Store Owner, "Son... I like your attitude; I like that positive spirit and would like to offer you a job."

Boy, "No thanks."

Store Owner, "But you were really pleading for one."

Boy, "No Sir, I was just checking my performance at the Job I already have. I am the one who is working for that lady I was talking to!"

This is what we call 'Self Appraisal'. Every time if we don't get ahead of others, we blame others for it. We should look to our self and compare, find own weaknesses and work hard to throw away weaknesses. Always Work Hard, Honest and with full Dedication. It will always pay up.

Insights From Vespers Makado

"Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else." Galatians 6:4

The concept of self-appraisal is the exact thing Paul talks about in Galatians 6. The bible says that each one should test his own actions. That's exactly what that little boy did, to test his own actions. Before we can complain about being rejected in our relationships or being divorced, are we doing a good job in our relationships and marriages? Before we can cry before God about being fired from work, are we doing our best at our current occupations?

After testing our own actions, we should take pride and be glad in the good work that we do. That little boy rejoiced in his good work. If we test our work and see it good, let's rejoice concerning the good that we do.

HAVING A BEST FRIEND

02
STORY

A story tells that two friends were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey, they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face.

The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand "Today my best friend slapped me in the face".

They kept on walking until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but the friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he wrote on a stone "Today my best friend saved my life".

The friend who had slapped and saved his best friend asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, you write on a stone, why?"

The other friend replied "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand where winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

Insights From Vespers Makado

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." Philippians 4:8

In life, we shouldn't focus on the bad, but we should focus on the good. We shouldn't dwell much on the bad things our loved ones do to us, we should dwell more on the good things. The bible doesn't allow us to think much about the bad things people do to us, because we are only supposed to think about lovely and beautiful things. Let's adopt an attitude of quickly forgetting the bad and the negatives and dwelling longer on the good and the positives.

Another thing we see from that story is that we mustn't value the things that we have in life, but we should value who we have in life. He/she had a friend!

THE FALSE HUMAN BELIEF

03
STORY

A story tells that while a man was passing the elephants, he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at anytime can break away from their bonds but for some reason, they did not.

He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. “Well,” trainer said, “when they are very young and much smaller, we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it’s enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free.”

The man was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds but because they believed they couldn’t, they were stuck right where they were.

Like the elephants, how many of us go through life hanging onto a belief that we cannot do something, simply because we failed at it once before?

Failure is a part of learning. We should never give up the struggle in life. You fail not because you are destined to fail, but because there are lessons which you need to learn as you move on with your life.

Insights From Vespers Makado

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” Galatians 5:1

The Son of man set us free, therefore we are free indeed. He set us free from all evil spirits that aimed to torment us. He set us free from all forms or oppressions, including religious oppression. Let’s recognize that we are bigger that the ropes that try to tie us down. There were seasons where small ropes would limit us, ropes like false rumors and depression. Unlike those elephants, let’s recognize our strong spiritual muscles and claim the freedom that we received in Christ. Christ is for us; nothing can bind us.

THE WET PANTS

04
STORY

A story tells that there is a nine-year-old kid sitting at his desk and all of a sudden, there is a puddle between his feet and the front of his pants are wet.

He thinks his heart is going to stop because he cannot possibly imagine how this has happened. It's never happened before, and he knows that when the boys find out he will never hear the end of it.

When the girls find out, they'll never speak to him again as long as he lives. The boy believes his heart is going to stop; he puts his head down and prays this prayer, "Dear God, this is an emergency! I need help now! Five minutes from now I'm dead meat." He looks up from his prayer and here comes the teacher with a look in her eyes that says he has been discovered.

As the teacher is walking toward him, a classmate named Susie is carrying a goldfish bowl that is filled with water. Susie trips in front of the teacher and inexplicably dumps the bowl of water in the boy's lap.

The boy pretends to be angry, but all the while is saying to himself, "Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord!"

Now all of a sudden, instead of being the object of ridicule, the boy is the object of sympathy. The teacher rushes him downstairs and gives him gym shorts to put on while his pants dry out.

All the other children are on their hands and knees cleaning up around his desk. The sympathy is wonderful. But as life would have it, the ridicule that should have been his has been transferred to someone else – Susie. She tries to help, but they tell her to get out. "You've done enough, you klutz!"

Finally, at the end of the day, as they are waiting for the bus, the boy walks over to Susie and whispers, "You did that on purpose, didn't you?"

Susie whispers back, "I wet my pants once too."

All of us go through all good and bad things in life. We should always remember how we felt when we were in same condition and should not mock others for being in it. Always try to understand their situation as if you are in it and help much as possible praying to God that today you are in a condition to help someone who needs it.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

The bible instructs us to be kind. Kind people don't rejoice because others are suffering. Kind people aren't mean. Kind people aren't selfish too. We should be willing to help each other just as in Christ God helped us too. We failed to attain righteousness, but through Christ God gave it to us. We should have that kind of compassion in us too. Susie was kind-hearted, we should display that kind of character too.

God is love, if we claim that God is in us, then we should walk in love. We shouldn't use harsh words; we shouldn't be cruel. If we believe that Jesus is Lord, then we should allow His love to live in us.

NEVER TO GIVE UP

05
STORY

A story tells that one day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey. He invited all his neighbors to come over and help him.

They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement he quieted down. A few shovels loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw.

With every shovel of dirt that fell on his back, the donkey was doing some thing amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up.

Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and totted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick is too not to get bogged down by it. We can get out of the deepest wells by not stopping. And by never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up!

Insights From Vespers Makado

"Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne. Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up." Hebrews 12:2-3 (TEV)

Jesus didn't think of the pain He was going through, but considering the joy that was set before Him, He chose to endure the pain. We too should consider the joy of heaven set before us and endure all situations. Let's look at Jesus!

THE WISE OLD MAN

06
STORY

A story tells that a wealthy man requested an old scholar to wean his son away from his bad habits. The scholar took the youth for a stroll through a garden. Stopping suddenly, he asked the boy to pull out a tiny plant growing there.

The youth held the plant between his thumb and forefinger and pulled it out. The old man then asked him to pull out a slightly bigger plant. The youth pulled hard, and the plant came out, roots and all. "Now pull out that one," said the old man pointing to a bush. The boy had to use all his strength to pull it out.

"Now take this one out," said the old man, indicating a guava tree. The youth grasped the trunk and tried to pull it out. But it would not budge.

"It's impossible," said the boy, panting with the effort.

"So it is with bad habits," said the sage. "When they are young it is easy to pull them out but when they take hold they cannot be uprooted."

The session with the old man changed the boy's life.

Don't wait for Bad Habits to grow in you, drop them while you have control over it else, they will get control you.

Insights From Vespers Makado

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1

That scripture tells us about the stage at which we should throw away everything that hinders our faith. We should throw it when it still easily entangles us. We shouldn't wait for it to grow into a huge mountain that stands in front of us blocking our way. That's the same idea we got from the story above, we should quit bad habits when they are still tiny.

Habits like adultery should be stopped before their roots grow deep within us, otherwise pulling them away will be difficult because of many sexual partners. Drinking and smoking should be stopped before it turns into an addiction.

TWO FRIENDS HAD JOINED

A COMPANY

07
STORY

A story tells that two friends, Jim and Stew, had joined a big sales company together just after graduation. Both of them worked really hard.

Three years have passed and the company's director promoted one of them – Stew became sales executive. Jim did not get any promotion and remained at sales department.

Jim decided that it is unfair, so he came to his boss and told him, that he doesn't appreciate a hard working staff. The boss knew that Jim works hard, and in order to show difference between him and Stew, he asked: "Go and find anyone selling watermelons in the market."

When Jim returned, the boss asked, "How much per kg?"

So Jim went back to the market and then returned to say the price, $12 a kg.

Then the boss asked Stew the same thing. Stew went to the market, and when he returned he told, "at the moment there is one person selling watermelons, $12 per kg, $100 for 10 kg, now he has 340 watermelons in stock. On the table there are 48 water melons, each of them weighs about 15 kg. Water melons were bought from the South two days ago, they are fresh and good quality."

Jim was impressed by the difference between him and Stew. He realized that he needs to learn a lot from his friend.

As you can see from this story, successful people are more observant. They think and see several years ahead, while most of people see only tomorrow.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures everyday to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11

We should be of noble character. A person with a noble character doesn't compare himself to others, but like the Bereans we should pay attention to detail. That's what Stew from the story above did too, he was observant.

LOOKING AT THE MIRROR

08
STORY

A story tells that one day all the employees reached the office and they saw a big advice on the door on which it was written, “Yesterday the person who has been hindering your growth in this company passed away. We invite you to join the funeral in the room that has been prepared in the gym”. In the beginning, they all got sad for the death of one of their colleagues, but after a while they started getting curious to know who that man was who hindered the growth of his colleagues and the company itself.

The excitement in the gym was such that security agents were ordered to control the crowd within the room. The more people reached the coffin, the more the excitement heated up. Everyone thought, “Who is this guy who was hindering my progress? Well, at least he died!”

One by one the thrilled employees got closer to the coffin, and when they looked inside it, they suddenly became speechless. They stood nearby the coffin, shocked and in silence, as if someone had touched the deepest part of their soul. There was a mirror inside the coffin, “Everyone who looked inside it could see himself.”

There was also a sign next to the mirror that said, “There is only one person who is capable to set limits to your growth. It is YOU.”

You are the only person who can revolutionize your life. You are the only person who can influence your happiness, your realization and your success. You are the only person who can help yourself. Your life does not change when your boss changes, when your friends change, when your partner changes, when your company changes. Your life changes when YOU change, when you go beyond your limiting beliefs, when you realize that you are the only one responsible for your life. The most important relationship you can have is the one you have with yourself.

The world is like a mirror: it gives back to anyone the reflection of the thoughts in which one has strongly believed. The world and your reality are like mirrors lying in a coffin, which show to any individual the death of his divine capability to imagine and create his happiness and his success. It’s the way you face life that makes the difference.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"A man reaps what he sows." Galatians 6:7b

Our output if often the product of our input. Is we want a huge harvest; we should put many seeds. If we want to see positive change, we should work towards it, hence we reap what we sow. If we want to grow in any area, we should do whatever that makes us increase in that area. In that way, we are the ones who can limit our own growth.

The same applies even for the kingdom of God. If you want to develop your spiritual level, you should start reading the bible, praying, fasting and worshiping often. That means you are the only individual standing in the way of you growing in your relationship with God. You reap what you sow. If you seek God, you will find Him.

TWO FROGS

09
STORY

A story tells that a group of frogs were traveling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. When the other frogs saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead.

The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead.

Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died.

The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out.

When he got out, the other frogs said, "Did you not hear us?" The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

There is power of life and death in the tongue. An encouraging word to someone who is down can lift them up and help them make it through the day. So be careful of what you say. Speak life to those who cross your path. The power of words... it is sometimes hard to understand that an encouraging word can go such a long way.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

We should stand firm. Nothing should move us. Like those frogs, we should keep trying to stay on the correct path. We mustn't listen to discouragements. Let's make God our dwelling place forever. Our labour in the Lord is not in vain. We should speak using nice and kind words, people might think we are foolish for choosing love and forgiveness and kindness but it's the Lord who rewards. All our works to Him are not in vain, He will reward us.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER

10
STORY

A story tells that a man feared his wife wasn't hearing as well as she used to, and he thought she might need a hearing aid. Not quite sure how to approach her, he called the family Doctor to discuss the problem. The Doctor told him there is a simple informal test the husband could perform to give the Doctor a better idea about her hearing loss.

"Here's what you do," said the Doctor, "stand about 40 feet away from her, and in a normal conversational speaking tone see if she hears you. If not, go to 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response."

That evening, the wife is in the kitchen cooking dinner, and he was in the den. He says to himself, "I'm about 40 feet away, let's see what happens." Then in a normal tone he asks, "Honey, what's for dinner?"

No response.

So, the husband moves to closer to the kitchen, about 30 feet from his wife and repeats, "Honey, what's for dinner?"

Still no response.

Next, he moves into the dining room where he is about 20 feet from his wife and asks, Honey, "What's for dinner?"

Again, he gets no response so, He walks up to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away. "Honey, what's for dinner?"

Again, there is no response.

So, he walks right up behind her. "Honey, what's for dinner?"

"James, for the FIFTH time I've said, CHICKEN!"

The problem may not be with the other one as we always think, could be very much within us...!

Insights From Makado Vespers

"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."
Lamentations 3:40

Jesus taught about the same issue when he said that we shouldn't see the stick in someone's eye while not being able to see the log in our eye. We should frequently test ourselves and see if we are still on the right and correct path. From the story above, the man never thought that the problem might be with him. That's what often happens in life, we do not think that we might be the ones on the wrong side, yet most of the time we will be. It takes humility to accept that we are the ones with the problem, and not the ones we are accusing.

The most important thing we should check in us is to see if we still have that fear of God in us. It's normal to go to church without fearing God from within. Let's constantly review ourselves.

TWO MEN WERE VERY SICK

11
STORY

A story tells that two men were seriously ill. They occupied the same room in the hospital. One of them was lying in the bed near the only window in their room. Every day he was allowed to spend some time sitting up in his bed to help draining the fluid from lungs. The other man was forced to spend all his days flat on his back.

They talked a lot about their life, families, jobs, vacations. Every time, when the first man was sitting by the window, he described in detail all that he saw outside the window. His roommate always looked for those moments, when his world was broadened and brightened up by the world outside.

Amazing views of a park with a beautiful lake could be seen from the window of their room. Children delightfully played among ducks and swans. Couples walked arm in arm among colourful flowers. Also, the stunning city skyline could be seen.

When the man by the window had been thoroughly describing all that was happening outside the window, his roommate would close his eyes and imaged all the beautiful scenes of life that were told to him.

One night the man, whose bed was near the window, died peacefully during sleep and his roommate was very sad.

After some time, when the nurse came to visit him, he asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse agreed and kindly made the switch. When she left, the man slowly and painfully propped himself up on one elbow and took the first look at the world outside. He was stunned. The window faced a blank wall.

When the nurse came to visit him the next time, he told her about beautiful things outside the window that his roommate described him. The nurse replied that his roommate was a blind man. She said: “Probably he just tried to encourage you.”

Insights From Vespers Makado

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

There is nothing wrong with giving each other hope. God wants us to encourage each other. Sometimes our faith is shaken by the troubles we come across. By giving someone encouragement, you are saving his/her soul.

In the story above, the man by the window was blind, yet he still encouraged a man with eyes. In other words, he poured from an empty cup. As for us, God has blessed us beyond measure, what's limiting us from encouraging others?

KEEP YOUR DREAM

12
STORY

A story tells that l have a friend named Monty Roberts who owns a horse ranch in San Isidro. He has let me use his house to put on fund-raising events to raise money for youth at risk programs.

The last time I was there he introduced me by saying, “I want to tell you why I let Jack use my horse. It all goes back to a story about a young man who was the son of an itinerant horse trainer who would go from stable to stable, racetrack to racetrack, farm to farm and ranch to ranch, training horses. As a result, the boy’s high school career was continually interrupted. When he was a senior, he was asked to write a paper about what he wanted to be and do when he grew up.

“That night he wrote a seven-page paper describing his goal of someday owning a horse ranch. He wrote about his dream in great detail, and he even drew a diagram of a 200-acre ranch, showing the location of all the buildings, the stables and the track. Then he drew a detailed floor plan for a 4,000-square-foot house that would sit on a 200-acre dream ranch.

“He put a great deal of his heart into the project and the next day he handed it in to his teacher. Two days later he received his paper back. On the front page was a large red F with a note that read, `See me after class.’

“The boy with the dream went to see the teacher after class and asked, `Why did I receive an F?’

“The teacher said, `This is an unrealistic dream for a young boy like you. You have no money. You come from an itinerant family. You have no resources. Owning a horse ranch requires a lot of money. You have to buy the land. You have to pay for the original breeding stock and later you’ll have to pay large stud fees. There’s no way you could ever do it.’ Then the teacher added, `If you will rewrite this paper with a more realistic goal, I will reconsider your grade.’

“The boy went home and thought about it long and hard. He asked his father what he should do. His father said, `Look, son, you have to make up your own mind on this. However, I think it is a very important decision for you.’

"Finally, after sitting with it for a week, the boy turned in the same paper, making no changes at all.

He stated, "You can keep the F and I'll keep my dream."

Monty then turned to the assembled group and said, "I tell you this story because you are sitting in my 4,000-square-foot house in the middle of my 200-acre horse ranch. I still have that school paper framed over the fireplace." He added, "The best part of the story is that two summers ago that same schoolteacher brought 30 kids to camp out on my ranch for a week." When the teacher was leaving, he said, "Look, Monty, I can tell you this now. When I was your teacher, I was something of a dream stealer. During those years I stole a lot of kids' dreams. Fortunately, you had enough gumption not to give up on yours."

Moral: Don't let anyone steal your dreams. Follow your heart, no matter what. No Dream is too big or too small when one works hard to live it. One should always try making dreams come true no matter what.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16

Christ defines and describes our position in this world. We are like sheep among wolves. Several wolves who want to snatch away our dreams, our gifts, our purpose and our lives exist. The first thing is to recognize that we are sheep among wolves.

Jesus commands us to be as wise as snakes. Yes, snakes are wise. We should defend our dreams and the purposes we received from God just like a snake defends anything precious to it. Snakes have venom, they also can coil and strike, their colours blend with their surroundings, they are good at hiding e.g. under rocks and they give warning signals. Those are their defense mechanisms. What are our defense mechanisms too?

THE THIRSTY CROW

13
STORY

A story tells that one hot day, a thirsty crow flew all over the fields looking for water. For a long time, he could not find any. He felt very weak, almost lost all hope. Suddenly, he saw a water jug below the tree. He flew straight down to see if there was any water inside. Yes, he could see some water inside the jug!

The crow tried to push his head into the jug. Sadly, he found that the neck of the jug was too narrow. Then he tried to push the jug to tilt for the water to flow out, but the jug was too heavy.

The crow thought hard for a while. Then looking around it, he saw some pebbles. he suddenly had a good idea. he started picking up the pebbles one by one, dropping each into the jug. As more and more pebbles filled the jug, the water level kept rising. Soon it was high enough for the crow to drink. His plan had worked!

Think and work hard, you may find solution to any problem.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"This is what the Lord says – He who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters." Isaiah 43:16

While in a mathematics lecture, we were told that mathematics gives us hope that every problem has a solution. There is nothing unsolvable, plus, nothing is permanent in life. All seasons pass. If the storms keep raging, we should remember that we serve a God who curves out highways through the sea. He did that with Moses, with Joshua, with Elijah, with Elisha, and Jesus walked on top of water. Nothing is without a solution. At an old age, Abraham had children. In Christ, every problem has a solution.

A BAG OF COOKIES

14
STORY

A story tells that a woman was waiting for her flight at airport.

She bought a bag of cookies, found a place to drop and took out her book. She started to read and suddenly noticed that a man, sitting beside her, grabbed a cookie from her bag. She just tried to ignore this.

So, she munched cookies and at the same time watched how shameless cookie thief was diminishing her stocks. She thought to herself: "If I wasn't such a nice person, I would blacken his eye".

When only one cookie was left, she looked with interest and wondered what he would do. He smiled, took the last cookie and broke it in half. She thought: "This guy is so rude; he didn't even show any gratitude!"

After her flight was called, the woman gathered her baggage and headed to gate. She took her seat in the plane, and started to look for her book, which was almost complete. As she reached her baggage, she gasped with surprise, as there was an unopened bag of cookies.

A dreadful thought crossed her mind: "If my cookie bag is here, the other one was his and he just tried to share. She realized that she was the rude one, but it was too late to apologize.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

We should always be kind. Christ committed no sin, that means He was kind all the time. Imitating Christ is trying to always be kind to everyone. From the story above, that woman at the airport missed her opportunity to be kind and regretted it later. To avoid regretting missing such opportunities, let's be kind always.

The bible encourages us to do the same thing. It says that others were kind even to angels without knowing it. Others were kind in the buses and received employment while traveling. Let's be kind to everyone always.

THE SMARTEST MAN IN THE WORLD

15
STORY

A story tells of a doctor, a lawyer, a little boy and a priest were out for a Sunday afternoon flight on a small private plane. Suddenly, the plane developed engine trouble. In spite of the best efforts of the pilot, the plane started to go down. Finally, the pilot grabbed a parachute and yelled to the passengers that they better jump, and he himself bailed out.

Unfortunately, there were only three parachutes remaining. The doctor grabbed one and said, "I'm a doctor, I save lives, so I must live," and jumped out.

The lawyer then said, "I'm a lawyer and lawyers are the smartest people in the world. I deserve to live." He also grabbed a parachute and jumped.

The priest looked at the little boy and said, "My son, I've lived a long and full life. You are young and have your whole life ahead of you. Take the last parachute and live in peace."

The little boy handed the parachute back to the priest and said, "Not to worry father. The smartest man in the world just took off with my backpack."

Your job doesn't always define you, but being a Good Human being does.

Insights From Makado Vespers

"Then He said to them, 'Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who send me. For He wo is least among you all – he is the greatest." Luke 9:48

The kingdom of God does everything in the opposite way as how the world operates. It's more like the world runs in one direction while God operates in the opposite. Let me give you another practical illustration of the verse above different from the story we read. During a function with a high table, decorated chairs and security available, we would think that the one seating in front of everyone, being given the best hospitality and catering services is the greatest at that occasion. The bible tells us to look somewhere else. A 2-year-old who doesn't know what's happening is probably the least important at that event, he/she becomes the greatest because the least is the greatest.

Closing Thoughts:

As you reach the final pages of this devotional, remember that courage is not the absence of fear, but the presence of faith. Hope is not naive optimism, but the confident expectation of God's goodness. Peace is not found in circumstances, but in Christ. Strength is not self-made, but God-given.

These devotions are not the end of your story—but a new chapter in your walk of faith. Let every truth you've encountered here take root in your life. Let it guide your steps, inspire your prayers, and lift your spirit.

You are stronger than you feel, braver than you know, and more loved than you realize.

— Vespers Makado

Conclusion:
Title: Live Encouraged

You've walked through 50 reflections of faith, each a stepping stone toward a more resilient and hope-filled life. Now, take what you've read and live it.

Be courageous in trials. Be a source of hope to others. Let peace rule in your heart. And lean into the strength that God provides daily.

The journey doesn't end here. Carry these truths with you. Share them. Reflect on them. Return to them. And above all, keep walking—boldly, joyfully, and with unshakable faith.

— Vespers Makado

Author's Comment Regarding This Book:

"This is the Lord's doing, and it's marvellous
in our eyes."

About the Author

Vespers Makado is a faith-based writer and encourager dedicated to helping others find strength, peace, and purpose through the power of God's Word. With a passion for equipping believers to navigate life's highs and lows with grace and resilience, he writes devotionals that speak to the heart and stir the soul.

Through years of personal faith journeys and ministerial work, Vespers Makado continues to inspire readers across the world to live courageously, trust God deeply, and walk in renewed strength.

He resides with his family and continues to write, speak, and minister to those in search of hope and healing.

INSPIRATIONAL DEVOTIONS

FOR COURAGE, HOPE, PEACE AND RENEWED STRENGTH

BY MAKADO VESPERS

50 Inspirational Devotions for Courage, Hope, Peace and Renewed Strength by Makado Vespers provides consistent spiritual inspiration throughout its daily readings. Reading it provides a profound sense of inspiration, as each entry offers a unique and uplifting perspective on navigating life's challenges. The author has a gift for connecting with the reader's experiences, making the journey through its pages feel personally relevant and deeply motivating. The consistent, heartfelt tone throughout the book makes it an exceptional resource for anyone seeking to uplift their spirit and find a renewed sense of courage, hope, and inner peace. It truly serves as a steadfast companion for spiritual encouragement.

WHERE THE WEARY RISE
AN ANTHEM FOR THE AFRAID
A BENEDICTION FOR THE BROKEN